

# CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL

May 2014

3

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### **The General Assembly**

1. Receive the Report.

### **Local involvement** (See Section 4 of the Church and Society Council Report)

2. Encourage congregations and Presbyteries to take advantage of the opportunities for involvement in social, ethical and political issues through the resources and support provided by the Church and Society Council, and commend local congregational Church and Society contacts and members of relevant Committees in Presbyteries for their work; note that the Church and Society Council provides discussion resources, monthly news bulletins and runs regional and national events for the whole Church.
3. Encourage the relevant Committees in Presbyteries to work with other Presbyteries in the same Local Authority and with ecumenical partners to engage with debates and decisions about poverty and justice in local government and instruct the Church and Society Council to facilitate and support the development of positive relationships and fruitful encounter.

### **Responding to climate change** (See Section 5 of the Church and Society Council Report)

4. Note with grave concern the Fifth Assessment Report on the science of climate change published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2013 and call upon the Scottish and UK Governments and the European Union to take decisive action to reduce carbon emissions swiftly.
5. Instruct the Church and Society Council to investigate, with the Church of Scotland Investors Trust and Pension Trustees, the arguments for and against disinvestment from fossil fuel companies and to report to a future General Assembly.
6. Congratulate Eco-Congregation Scotland on its 300th church registration and encourage all congregations who are not yet members to consider becoming members.
7. Note with appreciation and thanks the appointment by the United Reformed Church of the Rev Trevor Jamison as a special category minister in the role of Environmental Chaplain with Eco-Congregation Scotland, and wish Trevor every success in this role.

### **Science and ethics** (See Section 6 of the Church and Society Council Report)

8. Commend the SRT Week of Prayer (8-14 June 2014) and encourage all parts of the Church to participate.
9. Encourage congregations to think and act creatively about how they can bridge the Digital Divide in their parish, especially in the context of changes in access to welfare benefits.
10. Note the potential for future changes with regard to organ donation choices and instruct the Church and Society Council to report on the issue of consent for organ donation to the General Assembly of 2015.

### **Striving together: celebrating competitiveness in sport** (See Section 7 of the Church and Society Council Report)

11. Urge that all involved in competitive sport play fairly, ethically, within the rules and within the spirit of the rules.
12. Encourage churches to ensure equality of opportunity of participation of all, for all of their activities, including those which involve sport and competition.

13. Commend the expansion of sports chaplaincy to sports other than football and encourage it in a wide variety of endeavours.
14. Welcome the commitment of the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee to promote fair play by all competitors.
15. Commend the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee for valuing equality and encourage it further in fulfilling its aim for equality for all.
16. Commend the Scottish Government to involve all in ensuring a lasting legacy from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, particularly in deprived areas.
17. Urge the Olympics Organising Committee to implement values of equality and ensure ways of giving minority groups a voice.
18. Encourage action to overcome sectarianism, bigotry and discrimination in sport and in the community in Scotland, and urge the Scottish Government to continue to monitor developments and to fund projects which are successful in changing attitudes and behaviours at a local level.
19. Urge the Scottish and UK Governments and sporting bodies to implement measures designed to reduce hazardous and harmful gambling and to impose a ban on advertising gambling in the context of sport.
20. Urge the Scottish and UK Governments and sporting bodies to impose a ban on advertising short-term ('payday') loan companies who charge exorbitant rates.

**Families and the Church in the 21st century: the meaning of kinship bonds** (See Section 8 of the Church and Society Council Report)

21. Encourage congregations to be sensitive to the new developments in fertility medicine and the implications these have for congregational and family life.
22. Instruct the Society, Religion and Technology Project to continue engagement with developments in research and legislation concerned with assisted reproduction, and encourage church members to use the resources of the Society, Religion and Technology Project to learn more.
23. Instruct the Church and Society Council to distribute to all congregations the contact details of support organisations for people affected by issues around assisted reproduction and adoption.
24. Instruct the Church and Society Council to prepare study/discussion materials based on the report Families and the Church, to facilitate open and honest discussion about families.
25. Encourage all congregations to support and promote adoption and fostering in association with the appropriate local authorities and services.
26. Affirm the bonds that we share in Christ, and encourage congregations to show the love and welcome to all that we are called to offer in God's name.

**Poverty and economics – welfare reform** (See Section 9.1-9.2 of the Church and Society Council Report)

27. Affirm that the primary aim of the welfare system is to enhance human dignity for all, so that every citizen may live life in all its fullness, and urge all consideration of welfare policy to be characterised by the principles of fairness and compassion.
28. Urge the UK Government to help those in most need, by increasing benefits by at least the rate of inflation, by ceasing to penalise social housing tenants who may have a spare room, by increasing the minimum wage to a living wage, and by prioritising reductions in inequality.
29. Strongly urge the UK Government to avoid denigrating and blaming people for their poverty.

30. Note the importance of involving people who are affected most by the decisions in the planning and implementation of welfare policies.
31. Urge the UK Government to devolve responsibility for welfare and benefits to the Scottish Parliament.

**Priority Areas Action Plan** (See Section 9.3 of the Church and Society Council Report)

32. Approve the Priority Areas Action Plan Interim Review and commit the Church and Society Council to its ongoing delivery.

**Food security** (See Section 9.5 of the Church and Society Council Report)

33. Note the important role that churches play in their local community in responding to need; commend and congratulate congregations and individuals that are involved in the provision of emergency food aid and encourage all congregations to consider if they can support local community food projects.
34. Believe that the Church's response to food poverty and insecurity should go beyond charity; it is primarily a justice issue.
35. Express severe concern that there continues to be increasing reliance on foodbanks across Scotland and urge the UK and Scottish Governments to prioritise the eradication of food insecurity in this country.
36. Urge congregations and Presbyteries to commit to a campaign of prayer, awareness-raising and political action on the issues of poverty in Scotland today, and instruct the Church and Society Council, in co-operation with the Mission and Discipleship Council and other partners, to assist and empower local groups in the church to this end.

**Tax, giving and wealth sharing** (See Section 9.6 of the Church and Society Council Report)

37. Instruct the Church and Society Council to report on the issue of tax, giving and wealth sharing to the General Assembly of 2015, including consideration of the impending changes related to the Scottish Rate of Income Tax or Scottish Independence, the merits of proposals for a Citizens Income, and other issues related to the use of money in church and society.

**Funeral poverty** (See Section 9.8 of the Church and Society Council Report)

38. Noting the increases in the costs of funerals, in particular the large increases in charges for burial or cremation, encourage parish ministers to read the guidance produced by the Ministries Council, and urge congregations to consider how they can help reduce the cost of funerals.

**Payday lending** (See Section 9.9 of the Church and Society Council Report)

39. Welcome the decision by the UK Government to put a legal cap on the cost of consumer credit; note the High Cost Credit Charter and instruct the Church and Society Council to continue to pursue action to tackle extortionate lending and promote alternative and affordable sources of credit.

**Homelessness in Scotland** (See Section 9.10 of the Church and Society Council Report)

40. Commend Scottish Churches Housing Action and look forward to marking 20 years of ecumenical service in establishing local initiatives to tackle homelessness and contributing to public debate about housing issues, and to supporting its ongoing work.

**Credit unions** (See Section 9.11 of the Church and Society Council Report)

41. Note and welcome the development of the Churches Mutual Credit Union and encourage all members of the church to save with a credit union.

**Ethical investment** (See Section 9.14 of the Church and Society Council Report)

42. Commend National Ethical Investment Week (19-25 October 2014) and encourage all parts of the Church to participate.

**Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice / Community Justice** (See Section 10.1 of the Church and Society Council Report)

43. Note the new name for the Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Community Justice and approve the revised constitution.

**Prison visitor centres** (See Section 10.2 of the Church and Society Council Report)

44. Welcome the work of the National Prison Visitor Centres Steering Group and continue to support the cross-agency work to create a visitor centre in each of Scotland's 17 prisons.

**End of life issues** (See Section 10.3 of the Church and Society Council Report)

45. Continue to oppose any change to the legal position with regard to assisted suicide because of concerns about the effect any such change would have on the way society views its weakest and most vulnerable members, whilst recognising that many individuals and families face difficult decisions at the end of life, and urge the provision of better resources for palliative care.

**Infant ashes inquiries** (See Section 10.4 of the Church and Society Council Report)

46. Express sympathy and share concern with all those affected by the issues raised by the recent revelations about infant cremation and welcome both the Mortonhall Investigation under Dame Elish Angiolini and the Infant Cremation Commission under Lord Bonomy.

**Racial justice, asylum and refugees** (See Section 10.6 of the Church and Society Council Report)

47. Note that the United Kingdom has a long tradition of being a country of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution and the words of Jesus to love our neighbour; urge the UK Government not to repeat offensive publicity campaigns such as 'Go Home' either on the streets or in Home Office centres such as the one in Brand Street in Glasgow.

**Human trafficking** (See Section 10.7 of the Church and Society Council Report)

48. Thank the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group for its ongoing work on the issue of human trafficking and welcome the group's engagement with the Proposed Human Trafficking (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament and the Draft Modern Slavery Bill in the UK Parliament.

**Corporal punishment and children's rights** (See Section 10.8 of the Church and Society Council Report)

49. Instruct the Church and Society Council to reflect theologically on corporal punishment of children in the context of the discourse on international human rights, and to report on this subject to a future General Assembly.

**The Church and 21st century health care** (See Section 11 of the Church and Society Council Report)

50. Endorse the partnership-based community asset development approach to spiritual care by faith communities and health and social care chaplaincy; recognise that this approach will require a significant shift in understanding of what is meant by health and social care chaplaincy; and support the work of the Spiritual Care Strategic Development Group in taking this work forward.

51. Instruct the Ministries Council and the Church and Society Council to investigate ways of promoting the new approaches to 21st Century Health Care outlined in the report in collaboration with the chaplains training development unit of NHS Education Scotland.

**Living a theology to counter violence against women** (See Section 12 of the Church and Society Council Report)

52. Call on members of the Church to affirm that violence against women is a sin and urge all men and women to renew efforts to live and work for gender justice.
53. Recognise that there is much more to be done in our churches to make it clear that women and men are equally made in the image of God, through care taken in the language used for worship, through sensitive preaching, use of the Bible, and in our relationships with each other.
54. Urge Councils and Committees, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to consider how they can live and promote a theology which counters violence against women.
55. Commend partnership working between Councils and Committees, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions, other agencies and ecumenical partners to challenge and eliminate violence against women in all its forms.
56. Welcome the continuing work of the Scottish Government on the issue of challenging violence against women.
57. Instruct the Church and Society Council to work with other partners to develop a national process to promote appropriate responses by the Church to the issues identified in the report.
58. Commend the resource from the World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches *Created in God's Image* for study and action by local churches and Kirk Sessions and instruct the Church and Society Council, the Mission and Discipleship Council and others to publicise and promote related resources and issues.

**Violence Against Women Advisory Group** (See Section 13 of the Church and Society Council Report)

59. Commend the Church of Scotland's Violence Against Women Advisory Group for its work and urge it to continue to consider emerging issues and to bring concerns to the attention of the General Assembly in the future.
60. Note that the Violence Against Women Advisory Group is able and willing to offer advice and information to anyone in the Church who would like to think about how they and their work can contribute to the eradication of violence against women in Scotland.

**Politics and Government** (See Section 14 of the Church and Society Council Report)

61. Express appreciation to the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office for the work it has co-ordinated with regard to the Churches' preparation of the referendum and encourage congregations to find out more about the work of the office and its resources in the run up to the referendum and the UK General Election in May 2015.

**The Scottish independence referendum** (See Section 15 of the Church and Society Council Report)

62. Noting that the General Assembly has decided to remain impartial with regard to the outcome of the referendum, note the report *Imagining Scotland's Future: Community Consultations* and instruct the Church and Society Council to publicise the themes identified in the report ahead of the referendum on Scottish independence and during public discussions about Scotland's constitutional future following the referendum.

**Education** (See Section 16 of the Church and Society Council Report)

63. Urge the Scottish Government to change the name of Religious Observance (RO) to Time for Reflection to better reflect current practice in schools following its 2005 guidelines and 2011 letter which encouraged the use of that or other appropriate titles to increase a sense of inclusivity in Religious Observance events.

64. Affirm and give thanks for the contribution that the Church of Scotland appointed representatives to Local Authority Education Committees make to the education experience in Scotland's schools, and affirm the belief that the Church appointed representatives provide a model for an expanded understanding of what is meant by democratic decision making that is truly participatory and rooted in communities.
65. Instruct the Church and Society Council, through its Education Committee, to continue to review the provision of core Religious and Moral Education and to offer appropriate support to teachers, local authorities and young people.

**Middle East** (See Section 17.1-17.2 of the Church and Society Council Report)

66. Encourage all parts of the church to pray for the success of peace talks in Syria and Israel/occupied Palestinian territories.
67. Note the UK Parliament's vote not to intervene with British military force in Syria and consider this to be an important and welcome step forward in the power of the legislature over the executive in matters of war.

**Europe** (See Section 17.4 of the Church and Society Council Report)

68. Note that 2014 is the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One and the 80th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration; express sorrow and regret for the terror and loss of life caused by war and totalitarianism and instruct the Church and Society Council to continue to work for peace and justice.
69. Commend the Conference of European Churches, and especially its Church and Society Commission, for working to represent the Churches at a European level, and urge that in European Union policy-making the Gospel priority for the poor is considered first, especially in matters relating to the economy, employment, trade, security and sustainability.
70. Note and reaffirm the deliverances agreed by the General Assembly of 1996 which give thanks for the work of the European Union in promoting peace, security and reconciliation amongst European nations, note that Scotland has been part of the European Union since 1973 and believe that Scotland should continue to be a member; affirm that, whether as an independent nation state or as a part of the United Kingdom it is better for Scotland, Britain and Europe for the United Kingdom to remain in the EU.

**Nuclear weapons** (See Section 17.5 of the Church and Society Council Report)

71. Urge the UK Government to abandon its nuclear weapons; welcome the statement by the World Council of Churches General Assembly encouraging the total global elimination of nuclear weapons and encourage members of the Church to participate in or to pray for the Faslane Easter Witness for Peace to be held on Saturday 28 March 2015.

**Age of army recruitment** (See Section 17.6 of the Church and Society Council Report)

72. Note that the UK is the only country in the EU to recruit 16 and 17 year olds into the armed forces; urge the UK Government to adhere to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child by ceasing to recruit below the age of 18.

**International development** (See Section 17.7 of the Church and Society Council Report)

73. Note and give thanks for the successes of the Enough Food For Everyone ... IF campaign, instruct the Church and Society Council and the World Mission Council working with Christian Aid to raise awareness of related issues, especially around tax and financial transparency, and to report concerns to future Assemblies, and congratulate the UK Government for meeting its commitment for spending 0.7% of Gross National Income in Overseas Development Assistance.

**Thanks and distribution**

74. Thank all those who assisted the Council in the preparation of the report and instruct the Council to write to Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of the European Parliament representing Scotland, relevant Scottish and UK Government Ministers and others involved in the issues raised in the report.

**REPORT****1. Introduction: Church and society at a time of national decision**

1.1 Speaking and listening, exchanging views and ideas and sharing beliefs is key to the work of the Church and Society Council: influencing others but also being ourselves changed and transformed by encounters and experiences. Over the past year, and in the coming months, as the electorate of Scotland face an historic decision, the role of the Church in dialogue with society is where a real difference can be made.

1.2 The Church is impartial on the question of independence, but it is committed to involvement in the referendum debate, a debate which has dominated public policy discourse for many months. The Council has put in a great deal of time and effort into creating safe spaces for dialogue about what sort of Scotland we want to live in, regardless of the outcome of the vote in September. The *Imagining Scotland's Future* programme has opened up new ideas and insights, and has helped to broaden the conversation beyond the usual suspects in politics and the media.

1.3 The strength of our voice at a national level is rooted in the experience of congregations and individuals in the church. Learning is an important part of that experience. Through congregational and Presbytery networks we strive to learn from and reflect the work of the church at every level in our relations with wider society.

1.4 Our overarching commitment remains to reflect the Gospel bias to the marginalised and vulnerable

and speaking truth to power in a context of widening inequality. As changes to the welfare system begin to come into effect, and local and national government expenditure continues to face pressures, we present an analysis of some of the impact on the most vulnerable in society, as well as tell some stories of what local churches are doing in response. We also present in this report some suggestions for further action by congregations to consider tackling the causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty.

1.5 We have become more aware in recent years of a growing confidence and public profile of an anti-religion agenda in Scotland. This should not be seen as a threat, but as a challenge to us all to think about how to continue to share the Gospel story. Where we defend the right of the Church to have its say, our motives are driven not by a desire to protect status, but because it enables the Church's common witness to the Gospel mission of love, service and care.

1.6 Our report this year also presents ideas for dialogue and discussion, prayer and action. On climate change, on the meaning of kinship bonds, on ethical issues in competitive sport, on living a theology which counters violence against women, on the Church's role in education – and many other important topics. The Church is full of ideas and questions; we all have a role to play in continuing the dialogue, to speak out and to listen. With so many others in Scotland this year, we are searching for and praying for wisdom and hope.



## 2. Executive summary

**2.1 Summary of action on previous deliverances:** This table includes all of last year's deliverances with a brief comment about how the issue has been followed up.

**2.2 Local involvement:** The strength of the Church's voice at a national level derives from its presence in and experience of local communities across Scotland. Here we report on our activities around communications, events and the relationship between the local and national elements of the Church, plus the campaigns we are pursuing over the coming year.

**2.3 Responding to climate change:** We acknowledge the urgency of the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, underline some important questions relating to UK energy policy and mark the 300th Scottish Eco-Congregation.

**2.4 Science and ethics:** There is an update on recent work, including the first Society, Religion and Technology Week of Prayer (in June 2014), the Digital Divide and forthcoming questions about organ donation.

**2.5 Striving together: celebrating competitiveness in sport:** This major report, published to coincide with the year of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, explores some of the interaction between ethics, religion and sport.

**2.6 Families and the Church in the 21st century: the meaning of kinship bonds:** New reproductive techniques, adoption and the changing face of family – and how the Church can respond – are considered in this policy report.

**2.7 Poverty and economics:** Welfare reform, congregational responses to social need, food security, the common weal, truth and lies about poverty, funeral

poverty, payday lending, homelessness, credit unions, the living wage and ethical investment are all covered in this section.

**2.8 Societal issues:** There are updates and policy lines on criminal justice, including prison visitor centres, end of life issues, infant cremation inquiries, sectarianism, asylum and refugees and human trafficking.

**2.9 The Church and 21st century health care:** As requested by the 2013 Assembly, this report covers some of the issues for hospital chaplains, but also for the Church as a whole in helping to support health healing and compassion for the sick and their families.

**2.10 Violence against women:** A major report *Living a theology to counter violence against women* is presented, alongside an update from the Church of Scotland's Violence Against Women Advisory Group.

**2.11 Politics and Government:** With the referendum in September we present the findings of our series of community consultations, *Imagining Scotland's Future*, alongside an update of Parliamentary activity.

**2.12 Education:** The Church's Education Committee sits under Church and Society; there is an update on chaplaincy, religious and moral education (RME), religious observance/time for reflection and the role of local authority church representatives.

**2.13 Peacemaking and international affairs:** Key issues this year are the situations in Syria and Israel/occupied Palestinian territory. There are also updates on Bolivia (following last year's report) and Europe (to coincide with World Mission's report this year). We also report on nuclear weapons, the age of recruitment to the armed forces and international development issues.



### 3. Summary of action on previous deliverances

#### 3.1 Deliverances from the 2013 General Assembly

2013 Deliverance	Activity and Outcome
<p>2. Confirm that the Church and Society Council has the authority and responsibility for campaigns which fall within its remit, so that the Council can sign up to appropriate campaigns on behalf of the whole Church of Scotland throughout the year, where there is already existing General Assembly policy in support.</p>	<p>During the year the Council has considered membership of a number of campaigns and continues to keep all opportunities under review. A brief report of current projects is included below at section 4.6.</p>
<p>3. Note the measures which the Scottish Government has taken to alleviate the hardship caused by the welfare reforms and urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation to ensure that no council tenants shall be evicted for rent arrears resulting from the Welfare Reform Act (the so called "Bedroom Tax"), where the Director of Housing is satisfied that affected tenants are doing all they can reasonably be expected to in order to avoid falling into arrears.</p>	<p>The Convener has written to the Convener of the Welfare Reform Committee in the Scottish Parliament, Michael McMahon MSP, the Scottish Government Minister for Local Government and Planning, Derek Mackay MSP, and had meetings with both of them over the course of the year. A report on the impact of changes to the welfare and benefits system has had on the most vulnerable in society is at section 9.1, and includes consideration of the so called "Bedroom Tax".</p>
<p>4. Express serious concern that international action has had almost no impact in stemming the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and urge the UK and Scottish Governments to take further action to meet the UK target of a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases by 80% by 2050, and to press for similar action internationally.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Environment and Climate Change and the UK Government Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Edward Davey MP. She also met with Mr Wheelhouse in February 2014. A report on the work of the Church of Scotland's Responding to Climate Change Project is below at section 5.</p>
<p>5. Congratulate Eco-Congregation Scotland on making its 100th congregational award and commend the charity to all Church of Scotland congregations and encourage them to become members of Eco-Congregation Scotland.</p>	<p>The continued success and development of Eco-Congregation Scotland is a cause for celebration and optimism. 2012 saw the 100<sup>th</sup> Award being made, and 2013 saw the 300<sup>th</sup> congregation joining the network. A further report can be found below at 5.4.</p>
<p>6. Urge members of each congregation to minimise their energy use and hence their carbon footprint, particularly in buildings and in their use of transport.</p>	<p>Information, advice, resources and ideas are available from the Church's Climate Change Officer, Adrian Shaw – <a href="mailto:ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk">ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk</a>. In January 2014 new guidance was issued to all church treasurers on good energy management.</p>

<p>7. Encourage those with appropriate gifts to explore maximising local food production.</p>	<p>The Council is working with partners including the Iona Community, Christian Aid and Eco-Congregation Scotland to promote awareness of the advantages of local food production, particularly to help address issues of food poverty. A report on this can be found below at 9.5.</p>
<p>8. Urge all congregations to take action to manage energy use in buildings more efficiently in order to reduce their consumption and carbon footprint.</p>	<p>Information, advice, resources and ideas are available from the Church's Climate Change Officer, Adrian Shaw – <a href="mailto:ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk">ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk</a>.</p>
<p>9. Call on the Scottish Government to give communities across Scotland a proper share of the benefits of Scotland's renewable energy and to work with community groups to identify how community-owned renewables might help resolve fuel poverty across the country.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to and subsequently met with the Scottish Government Minister for Local Government and Planning, Derek Mackay MSP. The Council has also submitted views and has followed with interest the work of a Scottish Land Reform Review Group which has taken this issue into consideration.</p>
<p>10. Encourage all campaign groups involved in the independence debate to maximise the opportunities for citizens of all backgrounds to engage in questions about the referendum.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to the chairs of Yes Scotland and Better Together and this issue is one regularly raised in meetings with politicians. The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer, Chloe Clemmons, has been leading the Council's work around the referendum; a report on activity and outcome can be found below at 15.</p>
<p>11. Encourage congregations to use all opportunities to raise the issues of the gospel and social justice in the debate about the referendum and possible future constitutional arrangements.</p>	<p>The Council's programme <i>Imagining Scotland's Future</i> has enabled many congregations to have a conversation about independence. A report on the referendum can be found below at 15.</p>
<p>12. Support the role of the Electoral Commission in overseeing the referendum on Scottish independence, and urge all sides to work in consensus to ensure a fair and legal vote.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to John McCormick, the Electoral Commissioner for Scotland and received an acknowledgement.</p>
<p>13. Welcome the involvement of independent international monitors to confirm that the election is free, fair and is run to the highest possible standards.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to the Secretary General of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, His Excellency Lamberto Zannier, and received an acknowledgement.</p>
<p>14. Support the right of voting for 16 and 17 year olds for the referendum on independence and for all future elections.</p>	<p>The Convener has written to the Scottish Youth Parliament and the National Union of Students Scotland, and the Council has been in dialogue with the National Youth Assembly Moderator, and through her, the NYA Reps.</p>

<p>15. Thank students and staff of Cumbernauld College and Kilmarnock College for their work to develop a new website to support school and further education chaplaincy in Scotland.</p>	<p>The website for school and further education chaplaincy was launched at Edinburgh City Chambers during the General Assembly in 2013. The website is <a href="http://www.schoolsandfechaplains.org.uk">www.schoolsandfechaplains.org.uk</a>. An update on education chaplaincy work can be found below at 16.6.</p>
<p>16. Encourage congregations to find out about 'Serve Your Local School' and for them to note that a toolkit has been prepared to help.</p>	<p>'Serve Your Local School' is a project supported by the Church of Scotland, Scripture Union Scotland, the Baptist Union of Scotland and CARE. The Council has promoted the website in its publicity and events over the last year. <a href="http://www.syls.org.uk">www.syls.org.uk</a>.</p>
<p>17. Instruct the Church and Society Council, through the Standing Committee on Education, to continue to develop work in five key areas: Religious Observance, Religious and Moral Education, chaplaincy in schools and colleges, representatives on Local Authority Committees and effective representation in public debate.</p>	<p>The Education Committee has continued to develop its work programme around these five areas over the past year. A report on its activities, outcomes and proposals for the coming year can be found below at section 16.</p>
<p>18. Instruct the Council to investigate the impact of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and resource reductions on the delivery of meaningful core Religious and Moral Education for all pupils in S1 to S6 and report to the General Assembly of 2014.</p>	<p>The Council has researched this issue and a full report can be found below at section 16.5. A survey of Scottish Local Authorities has revealed some concerns especially about the provision of core RME to S5-S6 pupils, the challenges facing small rural schools and how different authorities are responding to pressures on budgets and school time when considering RME.</p>
<p>19. Welcome the Iona to Westminster Pilgrimage for Peace and Economic Justice 2013 as an act of witness against nuclear weapons; encourage the pilgrims in their 756 mile walk from 19 May to 20 July; and invite those along the route to find ways of supporting the pilgrimage.</p>	<p>The Council congratulates the pilgrims for their witness and action. The Convener wrote about this initiative on her blog and the Church of Scotland media office also helped with publicity for the end of the walk. The Council continues to look for ways to highlight the Church's opposition to nuclear weapons and to further its thinking on economic justice.</p>

<p>20. Commend the ACT Palestine Forum prayer vigil, marked on the 24th day of each month, encourage congregations to note this initiative and invite all members of the Church of Scotland to participate in the World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel (22-28 September 2013).</p>	<p>The Council is working with the World Mission Council, Christian Aid Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church to hold events on the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month. So far these have been in Fairlie (September), Aberdeen (October), Glasgow (November), Fort William (January) and Linlithgow (February).</p> <p>We are also working with a UK group of Churches and Christian organisations to publicise the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (the 2014 dates are Sunday 21 September to Saturday 27 September), an initiative of the World Council of Churches.</p>
<p>21. Note that the world produces enough food for everyone but not everyone has enough food, commend the Enough Food For Everyone...IF campaign and instruct the Church and Society Council, working with the World Mission Council, Christian Aid, the Mission and Discipleship Council and others to promote the campaign to local congregations.</p>	<p>The Church of Scotland supported the Enough Food For Everyone...IF campaign from its launch in January 2013 through to its close in October. This large coalition of aid, development and faith organisations was brought together to concentrate moral and political action in the year when the UK hosted the G8. The campaign resulted in some success; more information can be found below at 17.7.</p>
<p>22. Instruct the Council, in consultation with the Social Care Council and the Priority Areas Committee, to assess the impact of HMG's recent and pending changes for 2013 to the benefits system on the poorest in our communities and report on the same to the General Assembly of 2014.</p>	<p>The Council is grateful for the support and advice from the Social Care Council and Priority Areas Committee – as well as Church Action on Poverty, Scottish Churches Housing Action, the Church Urban Fund and others – for their help with this report. It can be found below at section 9.1.</p>
<p>23. Instruct the Council to investigate the issue of food security in Scotland and report to the General Assembly of 2016.</p>	<p>The rise in the number of foodbanks and families in need of support is a growing concern. Food issues are addressed in the report below at section 9.5. Plans are in place for a report on food security in 2016.</p>
<p>24. Commend the work of the various feeding and food provision projects being undertaken in many parts of the nation, encourage congregations to support initiatives in their area and consider using such projects as an opportunity for an ecumenical expression of the Gospel lived out before the people of Scotland.</p>	<p>While individuals and congregations involved in such projects are to be thanked and encouraged in providing such a necessary response to urgent need, the Council believes that growing inequality and poverty is a shocking development. There is a real danger that foodbanks become established as a normal part of society, and we will be urging congregations and government to do everything within their power to make tackling the causes of poverty a priority, at the same time doing everything appropriate to alleviate the symptoms. A report on these issues can be found below at 9.2 and 9.5.</p>

25. Dispute claims that scripture offers any peoples a privileged claim for possession of a particular territory.	<p>The 2013 General Assembly paper <i>The inheritance of Abraham? A report on the 'promised land'</i> has been much discussed and debated, before last year's Assembly, during it, and since.</p> <p>Following the Assembly the Convener wrote to the Foreign Secretary and others to share the position of the Church of Scotland, and replies were received.</p> <p>The Convener also associated herself with a statement from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities condemning a rise in Islamophobic incidents following the murder in Woolwich of a British soldier.</p> <p>The Convener and representatives of the Church and Society Council and the World Mission Council have met and planned future meetings with representatives of various Jewish community organisations over the past year. A wide range of topics have been raised, including this report.</p>
26. Note that the current situation is characterised by an inequality in power and therefore reconciliation can only be possible if the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the blockade of Gaza, are ended, and on that basis encourage all parties and the international community to renew peace negotiations.	
27. Condemn acts of terrorism, violence and intimidation whether committed by individuals, organisations or governments.	
28. Reaffirm the historic position of the Church of Scotland that Israel is a country which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.	
29. Reaffirm the historic commitment of the Church of Scotland to a State of Palestine with the same rights and responsibilities recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.	
30. Reject racism and religious hatred and condemn anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.	
31. Support ongoing commitment to dialogue and conversation, with particular concern to make sure that those who are on the margins and whose voices are rarely heard get the opportunity to be listened to, especially Christians who live in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.	

<p>32. Instruct the Church and Society Council to publicise resources to encourage wide discussion of the report <i>The Inheritance of Abraham</i> and its concluding principles.</p>	<p>The Council has produced a discussion starter leaflet on <i>Justice and Peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory</i>. Other resources include Christian Aid's <i>Breaking Down Barriers</i> (<a href="http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/LOPT-breaking-down-barriers.pdf">http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/LOPT-breaking-down-barriers.pdf</a>) and the work of Embrace the Middle East (<a href="http://www.embraceme.org">www.embraceme.org</a>). The Church of Scotland continues to encourage visits to the country, and the World Mission Council are happy to advise. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel may also be able to provide speakers who have recently spent time in the country and can relate their personal experience. During the past year representatives of the Church and Society Council and others in the Church of Scotland have met with representatives of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and other Jewish groups in Scotland to engage in a process of dialogue and relationship-building.</p>
<p>33. Encourage the appropriate committees in Presbyteries to consider the report <i>The Inheritance of Abraham</i> and bring it to the notice of their presbytery.</p>	<p>A number of Presbytery Committees have requested further information and advice, and the Council has invited further comment and opinion from those committees.</p>
<p>34. Urge the UK Government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Rt Hon William Hague MP, and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Baroness Ashton, and received replies.</p>
<p>35. Urge the UK Government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that international law is upheld in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.</p>	
<p>36. Urge the UK Government and the European Union to use pressure to stop further expansion of Israeli settlements and remove existing illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank.</p>	
<p>37. Urge the United Nations to reinforce the actions agreed by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and the protections afforded under the status of Non-Member Observer State to the State of Palestine.</p>	
<p>The Convener wrote to the Chair of the CEIRPP, His Excellency Abdou Salam Diallo, Ambassador to the United Nations from Senegal.</p>	

<p>38. Welcome the opportunities for collaboration on a variety of key issues and instruct the Church and Society Council to work with Christian Aid Scotland to develop links with the <i>Instituto Superior Ecu�mico Andino de Teolog�a</i>.</p>	<p>The Convener visited Bolivia and the <i>Instituto Superior Ecu�mico Andino de Teolog�a</i> in October, with colleagues from Christian Aid Scotland and the World Mission Council. A report can be found below at 17.3.</p>
<p>39. Instruct the Church and Society Council to provide resources to assist congregations in finding out about work that Christian Aid is doing in Bolivia and linking the activity to the life of congregations in Scotland.</p>	
<p>40. Acknowledge the difficulties and constraints resulting from data protection legislation that may be faced by ministers in providing spiritual support to hospital patients from within their parishes and by hospital chaplains, instruct the Council to explore how spiritual care can best be offered to patients within the framework of existing data protection requirements, and report to the General Assembly of 2014.</p>	<p>The Council is grateful to Rev Ewan Kelly, Director of Spiritual Care in NHS Scotland, for his assistance in the production of a report, which can be found below at section 11. The changing face of care and support means that there are new opportunities and new ways of offering health and social care chaplaincy. Proper data protection should not be a barrier to the capacity of ministers and congregations to contribute significantly to the provision of health and social care chaplaincy.</p>
<p>41. Instruct the Council to investigate the rapidly increasing costs of funerals, particularly burials, and how this is impacting on the bereaved and those conducting funerals and report to the General Assembly of 2014.</p>	<p>The Council is grateful to the Ministries Council for their help in preparing this report, which can be found at 9.8. Issues about the costs of funerals have been raised with local authorities and funeral directors.</p>
<p>42. Thank all those who assisted the Council in the preparation of the report and instruct the Council to write to Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, Members of the European Parliament representing Scotland, relevant Scottish and UK Government Ministers and others involved in the issues raised in the report.</p>	<p>The Convener sent correspondence to a wide range of individuals and organisations involved in public life and social justice. Several meetings were arranged on the back of these which help to develop new relationships and strengthen existing ones.</p>



43. Welcome the publication of the report <i>The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty</i> , and commend it to congregations for study and action.	The Council has continued to work closely with the Methodist Church, Baptists Together and the United Reformed Church to further this initiative. Study resources have been produced, and there has been ongoing engagement with the UK Government. The report has been translated into Welsh and the Welsh Assembly held a debate on the report. A wide group of Churches and Christian organisations have since commended and supported the report, including the Scottish Episcopal Church. Further work on this partnership and related advocacy work can be found below at 9.7.
44. Reaffirm that poverty is a scandal and instruct the Church and Society Council, in consultation with the Priority Areas Committee, to continue to work with ecumenical partners to find new ways to challenge the myths, lies and spin in debates about poverty, in society and in the church.	
45. Instruct the Council to consider the merits of a 'Citizen's Income' and to report their conclusions to a future General Assembly.	In June 2013 the Council agreed to establish a new working group to prepare a report on the theme of tax, giving and wealth sharing, in society and in the Church. This report will be presented in 2015, and the working group will consider the concept of a 'Citizen's Income' as part of their deliberations. See section 9.6.
46. Affirm the conclusions of the report <i>Human rights: what does God require of us? Justice informed by love</i> that the basis of human rights is relational: our duty and responsibilities to one another sits alongside our personal desires and needs, based on love-informed justice that comes from God.	The Convener wrote to a wide range of civic and political decision makers and influence shapers, including all MSPs and Scottish MPs and MEPs, responsible Government Ministers in the Scottish and UK Government and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
47. Affirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and European Convention on Human Rights in upholding our commitment, because of our faith in a God of love, to love our neighbours, who are every person, in every place and in all times.	
48. Instruct the Church and Society Council to develop human rights resources for study by congregations, Presbyteries and with ecumenical and inter faith partners.	At the time of writing, resources have not yet been published. The Council is working with the Rev Jenny Adams, a parish minister involved in adult education, and with the Conference of European Churches Church and Society Commission (who have considerable experience on this issue) to produce materials for a Scottish church audience.

<p>49. Instruct the Council to share its report on human rights with Non-Governmental Organisations working on human rights issues, and to devise ways of sharing those Organisations' resources and thinking on human rights with the Church.</p>	<p>The Convener wrote to the following organisations:</p> <p>Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Conference of European Churches – Church and Society Commission, the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Amnesty International, Amnesty International – Scotland, Liberty, British Institute of Human Rights, Progressio, Anti Slavery International, Justice, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and the Scottish Human Rights Commission.</p>
<p>50. Instruct the Church and Society Council to do further work on the connections between climate justice and human rights.</p>	<p>The Convener went on a joint Christian Aid Scotland, World Mission Council and Church and Society Council visit to Bolivia in October 2013 to learn about the human rights implications of climate change. A fuller report can be found at 17.3.</p>
<p>51. Instruct the Church and Society Council to work with Christian Aid and others to promote just access to safe, clean water for every person, in every place, in every time.</p>	<p>Creation Time is an ecumenical season in September / October looking at environmental spiritual and practical issues. In 2013 the theme was Water Justice, to coincide with the International Year of Water Co-operation. Eco-Congregation Scotland produced special resources for Creation Time, which were made available through the Starters for Sunday website. The resources remain available for us at <a href="http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/care_for_the_earth/articles/creation_time">www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/care_for_the_earth/articles/creation_time</a></p>
<p>52. Instruct the Church and Society Council to engage in public discourse about the UK Human Rights Act, a UK Bill of Rights and the UK and Scotland's future relationship with regard to the Council of Europe.</p>	<p>The Council had initially planned to host a national conference exploring relevant issues. We were not able to prioritise this in 2013 but we intend to take the matter further in 2014.</p>

## 4. Local involvement

**4.1** The dynamic relationship that the Council has with local congregations and Presbyteries remains essential to ensuring that the Church's national voice is authentic and rooted in the real life experience of the communities it serves. The Council is made up of ministers and members from all over Scotland and all walks of life; how information and ideas are shared and communicated is always evolving. The Council listens to and engages with Presbyteries and local congregations on issues related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

**4.2** The Council's Local Involvement Officer is Fiona Buchanan ([fbuchanan@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:fbuchanan@cofscotland.org.uk)). Fiona co-ordinates this area of our work and is our first point of contact for enquiries and information.

**4.3** We are also working well with Go For It! As a new programme in the Church, things are settling in, and we have been delighted to hear about the variety of projects which are being supported and the large number of people who are benefiting in many different ways. We hope that the sharing of stories and ideas can continue to be a point of dialogue and inspiration in our work seeking to influence society and the Church. The Council's local involvement work includes:

**4.4.1 Church and Society Conference – Speak out!** – In October over 100 participants joined the Moderator, Convener as well as members of the Council and staff in St Matthew's Church in Perth for a day focusing on the theme of speaking out. Plans are in development for a future event in 2014.

**4.4.2 Roadshows** – Over the past couple of years we have developed a successful format of Presbytery roadshows, lasting a few hours (often on a Saturday morning). We ask the Presbytery to provide a venue and publicise the event, and Council members and staff provide the content. This could either be a general introduction to our work, or looking at a specific topic. We are always pleased to join with other Councils and Committees to enhance interest in the wider work of the Church.

**4.4.3 Presbytery Church and Society Committees** – Presbytery Committees are a way for us to disseminate information, but we only occasionally hear news and reports of what is happening locally which might be relevant and of interest nationally. All Presbytery Committees are encouraged to keep in touch and let us have their thoughts with a view to sharing good practice.

**4.4.4 Congregational contacts** – In 2010 the General Assembly instructed every Presbytery to ensure that each congregation appoint a Church and Society Contact person. This growing network of around 650 volunteers is essential to our local involvement work, and we are very grateful for their commitment. We want to be as helpful as possible in serving congregations, and so if you are a congregation without a rep and would like to know how this role is filled elsewhere, or if you are a rep but need more support – please contact Fiona Buchanan.

**4.4.5 Leaflets and resources** – We produce a number of discussion starter leaflets on topics ranging from nuclear weapons to climate change. There are also more substantial study packs on contemporary topics such as human trafficking, multi-culturalism etc. In 2013 two special resources relating to finance and money were produced:

- *Parables and Possessions*, inspired by the 2012 Special Commission on Purposes of Economic Activity, was used as the Lent Course published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland earlier this year ([www.ctbi.org.uk/lent](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/lent)).
- *Money Doing Good*, which helps congregations engage with National Ethical Investment Week in October ([www.neiw.org/charities-churches/](http://www.neiw.org/charities-churches/)), produced in association with the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility.

Copies of all leaflets and study guides are available on the website ([www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)) or from Fiona Buchanan.

**4.4.6 E-news** – The Council produces a monthly E-news, which is primarily designed for congregational Church

and Society Contacts, and others with an interest in our work. News, events, opportunities and campaigns are highlighted, with the material ideal for sharing in a parish magazine, or with Presbytery papers.

**4.4.7 Sally's Blog** – The Convener has been a regular blogger on Church and Society issues. Her blog can be found on the Church of Scotland website under the 'blogs' tab ([http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/church\\_and\\_society/](http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/church_and_society/)). It remains a useful way to reflect on a current issue or respond creatively to an event or opportunity. Church and Presbytery websites are invited to consider linking up to the blog page to encourage greater traffic and sharing of ideas.

**4.4.8 Broadcast and print media** – The Council continues to work closely with and rely on the Media Relations team in the Church Offices for assistance, advice and support in spotting opportunities and increasing the positive profile of the Church and its message.

#### **4.5 Midlothian Church – Council Liaison Group**

**4.5.1** In September 2013 the local churches in Midlothian local authority gave a presentation to the full Council meeting on poverty and social justice and how the churches were responding. Local representatives working with the national Church and Society Council helped to present a well-received session including questions and answers from local councillors. This opportunity, facilitated by the Midlothian's Church-Council liaison group has much to lend itself to other areas of Scotland, where working together with government at a local as well as a national level can make a real difference in helping the most vulnerable. Speaking to politicians and officials about the role and witness of the Church's mission of service to those in need is as, if not more, important than negotiations about national policy which the Council frequently engages in. We have been ably supported in Midlothian by the local church community and we commend this initiative to others.

#### **4.6 Campaigns**

**4.6.1** In 2013 the Council started to classify the campaigns it engaged with according to the following criteria:

- In sympathy with the campaign
  - The Church broadly shares the campaign's objectives and ways of working.
- In association with the campaign
  - The Church shares the campaign's objectives and agrees that its name and logo can be used in publicity.
- A member of the campaign
  - The Church is in full membership of the campaign and is active in promoting its aims, involved in developing its strategy and in implementing activities. This may have financial or resource implications for the Council.

#### **4.6.2 Members of:**

- ACT Palestine Prayer Vigil  
A global prayer movement praying for peace in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and the wider Middle East on the 24th of each month. In Scotland Church and Society works with World Mission, Christian Aid and the Scottish Episcopal Church to promote prayer and understanding. [www.actpalestineforum.org/vigil](http://www.actpalestineforum.org/vigil)
- Justice for Bangladeshi Garment Workers  
Led by the World Mission Council and several other UK Churches in partnership with the Church of Bangladesh, to improve conditions for garment workers. [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/mission\\_worldwide/get\\_involved/justice\\_for\\_bangladeshi\\_garment\\_workers](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/mission_worldwide/get_involved/justice_for_bangladeshi_garment_workers)
- Scottish Living Wage Campaign  
A campaign organised by the Poverty Alliance seeking to introduce and implement a living wage for all workers in Scotland. [www.slw.povertyalliance.org](http://www.slw.povertyalliance.org)
- Stop Climate Chaos Scotland  
This coalition of organisations continues to campaign vigorously for the Scottish Government to put into effect its commitments under the Climate Change

Scotland Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2013 this has focused on active transport (walking and cycling). [www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland)

**4.6.3** In association with:

- End Child Poverty Scotland  
Working to highlight the issue of child poverty and calling on society and the government to take action to tackle it. [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)
- Flesh and Blood  
Encouraging Christians to be blood donors and join the organ donor register. [www.fleshandblood.org](http://www.fleshandblood.org)
- National Ethical Investment Week  
Held every October, this week raises awareness to let people know about sustainable and ethical options in their financial decisions. [www.neiw.org](http://www.neiw.org)
- Robin Hood Tax  
Calling for a tiny tax to be imposed on financial transactions to help pay for essential public services, climate adaptation and international development. [www.robinhoodtax.org.uk](http://www.robinhoodtax.org.uk)
- Scotland's For Peace  
A group of Scottish based organisations working to raise awareness of peace issues. [www.scotland4peace.org](http://www.scotland4peace.org)
- Stop Destitution Now  
Organised by the Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Survival Trust, this campaign is calling for a change in policy to stop destitution among asylum seekers. [www.stopdestitution.org.uk](http://www.stopdestitution.org.uk)
- Trace the Tax  
Christian Aid's campaign for tax transparency calls for country-by-country financial reporting by multinational businesses. This would ensure that tax is paid in each jurisdiction. [www.christianaid.org.uk/actnow/trace-the-tax](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/actnow/trace-the-tax)
- White Ribbon Scotland  
Part of an international campaign for men in Scotland who want to end violence against women [www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk](http://www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk)

**4.6.4** In sympathy with:

- Asia Floor Wage  
A campaign to improve the wages of garment workers in Asia, run by Labour Behind the Label. [www.asiafloorwage.org](http://www.asiafloorwage.org)
- Campaign for a Fair Society  
A manifesto for the rights of people with disabilities, including a campaign against cuts. This is co-ordinated in Scotland by Values Into Action Scotland. [www.campaignforafairsociety.com](http://www.campaignforafairsociety.com)

**4.6.5** The Church of Scotland, through the Church and Society Council, is a member of the following groups or organisations:

- Crisis Action – an international charity which focuses on conflict and human rights. [www.crisisaction.org](http://www.crisisaction.org)
- Poverty Alliance – a Scottish membership organisation and national anti-poverty network which works with voluntary organisations, policy makers and politicians at Scottish, UK and European levels. [www.povertyalliance.org](http://www.povertyalliance.org)
- Poverty Premium Project – working with Church Action on Poverty, the Iona Community and the Scottish Episcopal Church, this project looks at tackling the additional costs of living in poverty. [www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodfuelfinance](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodfuelfinance)
- Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations – the umbrella organisation for Scottish charities. [www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk)
- Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum – a network of organisations and individuals committed to developing routes for off-road pilgrimage travel across Scotland. [www.sprf.org.uk](http://www.sprf.org.uk)
- World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel – The Church of Scotland is represented on the UK Planning Group which connects to a World Council of Churches initiative for this week, held in September each year. [www.pief.oikoumene.org/en/world-week-for-peace](http://www.pief.oikoumene.org/en/world-week-for-peace)

## 5. Responding to Climate Change

### 5.1 IPCC report

5.1.1 The fifth assessment report on the science of climate change by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was published in September 2013. It draws together and summarises research on climate change from over 9,000 published sources around the world. It is the most complete and up to date source of information on the science of climate change and an impressive review that contains a number of blunt messages for governments, churches and the public:

- Climate is changing: this is beyond doubt.
- Humans are driving this: there is no other plausible explanation.
- 'Business as usual' will push global temperature rises above two degrees Celsius, with disastrous consequences.

5.1.2 Much of the report reinforces what we already know but there are new insights. One of these is that there is far more coal, oil and gas in the ground than we can ever safely burn if we wish to contain global warming. Techniques such as carbon capture and storage, carbon offsetting or geo engineering solutions have not yet made any measurable impact on the increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide. The message that emerges from the report is daunting: the only safe way to manage fossil carbon resources if we wish to avoid unacceptable global warming is to leave them in the ground.

### 5.2 The energy debate

5.2.1 Climate change has profound implications for energy policy and comes at a time of change and uncertainty as seen by reporting of energy issues in the news. These stories include:

- the dramatic increase in prices by gas and electricity providers and demands that the government rolls back 'green subsidies'.
- the 2013 dispute at the INEOS plant at Grangemouth.
- the ongoing debate about fracking.
- the 2013 decision by the UK Government to go ahead with a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset.

5.2.2 The General Assembly last debated energy policy in 2007 when it considered the report *Energy for a Changing Climate*. This landmark report identified an ethical basis for energy policy and pointed to energy efficiency measures and renewable energy as the best way forward. These conclusions remain valid but the context is clearly changing. The Society, Religion and Technology Project is reviewing this report with the intention of reporting to Assembly in 2016.

### 5.3 Should the church disinvest from fossil fuel companies?

5.3.1 A group of young people in Dalgety Church are calling upon the Church of Scotland to disinvest from fossil fuel companies that have reserves of oil, coal and gas on their balance sheets that, if burned, will inexorably lead us to global warming of more than two degrees Celsius. The call raises uncomfortable questions for the Church: can we ask congregations to cut their carbon footprint while the Church of Scotland invests in companies that supply the oil, coal and gas that causes climate change? Operation Noah, a Christian climate change charity has launched a campaign called 'Bright Now', which urges denominations to disinvest from fossil fuel companies if they are to retain their integrity in the face of climate change – [www.brightnow.org](http://www.brightnow.org)

### 5.4 Eco-Congregation Scotland

5.4.1 Eco-Congregation Scotland passed a significant milestone with the 300th church, Priestfield Church in Edinburgh, joining in November 2013. Support to Eco-Congregations has been enhanced considerably by the appointment in 2013 of a chaplain, Trevor Jamison, a minister of the United Reformed Church. The URC is generously supporting Eco-Congregation Scotland by making Trevor available for up to five years through its 'Special Categories Ministry' programmes. This contribution along with support from other denominations, Christian Aid, SCIAF and the Scottish Government demonstrates that care for creation is a theme that can encourage effective ecumenical work and promote partnership with other organisations.



## 5.5 Ecumenical relationships

**5.5.1** The Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland meets three times a year and in June 2013 met at the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh. The theme of the meeting was pilgrimage. Work in 2014 is likely to focus on energy and climate change, and disinvestment from fossil fuels companies.

**5.5.2** The European Christian Environment Network Steering Group meets twice a year and holds a conference every other year. In October 2013 the network joined COMECE (the umbrella group for Catholic Bishops in Europe) and the Conference of European Churches to meet representatives of the European Commission to discuss EU work on climate change. In 2014 the main focus will be the conference to be held in Helsinki in September 2014. The theme will be how climate change is affecting the Arctic.

**5.5.3** The Scottish Churches Rural Group annually organises a display at the Royal Highland Show and considers a range of rural, agricultural and food issues at its quarterly meetings.

## 6. Science and ethics

### 6.1 Society, Religion and Technology Project

**6.1.1** The Society, Religion and Technology (SRT) Project continues to make a significant contribution to public debate around science, religion and ethics. The SRT Project is the leading point of contact between the Church and the issues and individuals involved in science and technology. The SRT Project has also supported two of the papers being presented at the General Assembly this year:

- ethical issues in competitive sport (section 7).
- the meaning of kinship bonds (section 8).

**6.1.2 Developments** – The SRT has hosted a full time additional staff member on secondment from the Scottish Government to work with the Church on issues around Credit Unions, and in particular the launch of the Churches Mutual Credit Union.

**6.1.3 Events** – In addition to involvement in the annual Edinburgh International Science Festival, the SRT for the first time this year participated in an event at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This took the form of a post-play discussion on the nature of the relationship between science and faith following the performance of the play “The God Particle”. The first SRT week of prayer is due to take place, 8-14 June 2014. Please see SRT website ([www.srtp.org.uk](http://www.srtp.org.uk)) for further details.

**6.1.4 Relationships** – The SRT continues to be involved with a number of organisations, including the Scottish Centre for Rural Research ([www.scr.ac.uk](http://www.scr.ac.uk)).

### 6.2 Digital divide

**6.2.1** The 2013 General Assembly report from the Panel on Review and Reform (Mission in the Digital Age<sup>1</sup>) included an instruction to the Society, Religion and Technology Project to explore some of the trends in society and to monitor progress towards a fully integrated digital society, and to report any issues of concern with regard to the digital divide. In addition, the Royal Society of Edinburgh has recently published an interim report on this issue<sup>2</sup>.

**6.2.2** In January 2014 the Convener of the Church and Society Council met with Fiona Hyslop MSP, the responsible minister in the Scottish Government. The Church highlights that there are a number of aspects to digital exclusion, including:

- the rural-urban divide
- the age divide
- the education divide
- accessibility for people in poorer communities (and the resulting poverty premium)
- accessibility risks for people with disabilities
- problems for people in developing countries

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/14406/Mission\\_in\\_a\\_digital\\_age.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/14406/Mission_in_a_digital_age.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/cms/files/advice-papers/inquiry/RSE\\_DI\\_Inquiry\\_Interim.pdf](http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/cms/files/advice-papers/inquiry/RSE_DI_Inquiry_Interim.pdf)



**6.2.3** The Scottish Government is already aware of many of these issues, and we would urge it to continue to prioritise tackling this aspect of inequality, especially as much access to services and benefits in the future is planned to be “digital by default”.

**6.2.4** The Church is also exploring whether there are specific ways in which we can contribute to alleviating the problems. For example, church buildings are often the only public building in a rural setting; might there be opportunities for the community to be provided with computers and internet access? In addition, there may be people within congregations who can offer practical assistance to those in the community who struggle, for example, with online forms. Congregations are urged to be aware of the issues, and to make every effort to tackle the effects.

### **6.3 Organ donation – voluntary or presumed consent?**

**6.3.1** In July the Scottish Government published ‘A Donation and Transplantation Plan for Scotland 2013-2020’. The Church of Scotland has long supported organ and blood donation, and has encouraged members to join the organ donor register and to regularly donate blood. In the last year the Church of Scotland has joined several other UK churches in supporting the ‘flesh and blood’ campaign, which encourages Christians who are able to, to see giving the gift of life as part of their discipleship.

**6.3.2** One issue on the horizon however is the possibility that at some point a future Scottish Government may wish to change the way that organ donation is handled. Currently individuals must opt-in to be an organ donor. Recently in Wales, the Welsh Government has changed to a system where everyone is automatically considered a donor unless they have opted-out; the models of operation are sometimes known as voluntary or presumed consent. The claim is that moving away from a voluntary model will result in more organ donors, and therefore more lives saved. There are however ethical and pastoral issues involved, such as the role of the state in such a personal decision, the nature of ‘gift’ in the context of

organ donation and the potentially conflicting wishes of the deceased and their family. In Wales different Churches took different positions on the change, with Anglicans and Catholics opposing, and Presbyterians and Quakers in support.

**6.3.3** Change in Scotland is not necessarily on the cards – the present Scottish Government say it is waiting to see an evaluation of the policy in Wales before making any recommendations. In the meantime we are keen to contribute to this ongoing conversation, encouraging people to be organ donors on the one hand, whilst at the same time reflecting on the moral and spiritual benefits and drawbacks for the different systems. We will take soundings from our partners in Wales and expect to report more fully on the question to a future General Assembly.

## **7. Striving together: celebrating competitiveness in sport**

The following report *Striving together: celebrating competitiveness in sport?* is a summary. The full report is available from the Church of Scotland General Assembly web pages – [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk) – and can be obtained in electronic format or paper copies, free of charge, by contacting the Church and Society offices on 0131 240 2275 or by e-mail from – [churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk)

### **7.1 Introduction**

With the Commonwealth Games taking place in Glasgow in 2014, sport is set to have a prominent profile in Scotland. Competitiveness in sport can draw out the best in people, but can also give rise to other behaviours which may cause concern. This report reflects on the place of competitiveness, based on the principles of loving our neighbours and treating others as we would want to be treated.

### **7.2 Christianity and sport**

In the early church, the response to sports was often one of suspicion, but movements such as ‘Muscular Christianity’

in the 19th century embraced sport more fully.<sup>3</sup> More recently, some have argued that while competition can elevate the character of those who are involved, there can be unhelpful pressures on athletes, that may encourage them to enhance their performance through any means possible.

### 7.3 Competitiveness

The word competition can mean both *'striving together' and 'striving against'*. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul invokes an image of striving, *together* and *against*, to highlight both our interconnectedness and interdependence.<sup>4</sup> Both elements of striving are important. Setting competition within the context of the command to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, competitors *strive together*, with God and others, pushing themselves so as to perform to the best of their abilities. Competitiveness between individuals or teams, where there is mutual respect, exemplifies *'striving together'*. Whether winning or losing, sport can encourage a sense of belonging, co-operation and teamwork, and fosters self-control, persistence and self-discipline. We believe that all involved in competitive sport can be guided by Jesus' words: *'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.'*<sup>5</sup>

### 7.4 Winning and losing

The thrill in achieving one's goal is a major part of the reward for a game well played. However, it may be that despite playing well, the opponent's performance is superior and we don't win. In competitive sport, we are responsible for pleasing God first, before everyone else. Those who are defeated can experience feelings ranging from disappointment to shame. Some may feel they have also lost face, or have let others down. It may take time to come to terms with losing, but defeat can provide valuable lessons.

<sup>3</sup> Erdozain D (2010) *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:14-23

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:12

## 7.5 Relationships

**7.5.1 Family matters** – Seeing a family member excel provides great joy. However, the families of sportspeople may need patience and compassion during difficult training schedules or disappointing results. Sport teaches children vital life lessons, including discipline and working as part of a team, working hard to achieve success and accepting defeat graciously. Those supporting young people in sport should uphold high standards of behaviour. However, in our enthusiasm it is easy to push boundaries – shouting abuse at officials or opponents, for example. Family members often sacrifice time, money, friendships and perhaps even the quality of their relationships, and this may add to athletes' pressure, particularly when they fail to achieve the success for which they had hoped.

**7.5.2 Supporters** – Sports fans join together in celebrating successes but can be quick to voice displeasure when their hopes are unfulfilled. Sporting rivalries exaggerate differences between neighbourhoods, cities or countries. Jesus teaches us to love one another and to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. This means striving against feelings of hatred and becoming reconciled to the fact that we are all loved equally as God's children.

**7.5.3 Team mates** – As well as competition against the opposition, there can be competition within the team. The dynamics of a sports team are complex – a sense of team when they play but, particularly in professional sport, with a fierce competition between squad members.

**7.5.4 The coach** – The coach seeks to encourage and inspire, challenging athletes to push their limits to perform to the best of their abilities, helping them deal with success and disappointment. While it is important that coaches address the ethical dimension of competition, this is an area where sports chaplains could complement their role.

**7.5.5 The sports chaplain** – Chaplains are concerned with the holistic wellbeing of people in sport, helping players to recognise that there is more to life than winning,

adulation and money. Whether one has a religious faith or not, chaplains can help people to recognise the importance of esteem, love, and hope.

**7.5.6 The opponent** – We should treat our opponents in the way that we want to be treated: with respect, playing hard but not seeking an unfair advantage. In Hebrews 10 we are encouraged to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”<sup>6</sup> This idea of encouragement to excel translates well to the context of competition – opponents motivate each other to rise to the challenge of the contest while playing fairly and respecting each other.

**7.5.7 Sponsors** – Sportspeople may experience dilemmas over endorsing products which they feel are unethical. Whilst sports sponsorship by tobacco companies is banned, no such ban applies to alcohol, gambling or payday lenders. There has been a campaign by English football fans against such advertising on club websites.<sup>7</sup> However sponsorship of individual clubs continues to be a concern.

## 7.6 Money matters

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> Money has a powerful influence on the potential for success in sport. Teams in the top leagues have money to buy the best players and so maintain their position; those in lower leagues have fewer such opportunities, thus restricting their chances of promotion to a higher league. In recent years there has been a marked increase in sponsorship, particularly of football, by gambling companies.<sup>9</sup> There has been a parallel increase in gambling in the general population. Problem gambling can be kept hidden and

undetected in its early stages. Players may also succumb to the temptation to get involved in ‘match fixing’ on the direction of the gambling fraternity.

## 7.7 Equality issues

**7.7.1** While women’s sport in Britain has never been stronger, inequalities in earnings between the genders remain. Cultural pressures on young girls may discourage them from active involvement in sport. Those from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are significantly less likely to participate in sport, particularly at club level, than their white counterparts.<sup>10</sup> The 2012 London Paralympics showcased disability sport in an unprecedented way, but more needs to be done. For people with a disability, participation can help rehabilitation both physically and socially, reducing stigma and discrimination.

**7.7.2** In many countries there is little or no access for disabled people to appropriate sports facilities or technological aids. Opportunities to compete are compromised by insufficient funding, not only to train but also to travel. Equality is one of the three values that underpin the philosophy of the Commonwealth Games Federation, the organisation responsible for the Games. While this is to be welcomed, equality of opportunity at ground level, particularly for disabled athletes, still has some way to go.

## 7.8 Technology and science

The desire to win pushes competitors and the industry which supports elite performers to maximise performance through a variety of means. Science and technology have led to improved equipment and have also influenced competitive performance through understanding of human physiology. The use of genetics to change or improve competitive performance (‘gene doping’) is of interest to many, although the technology is not yet available. Drugs have been widely used in some sports. The World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) is involved in a

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 10:24

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/jun/18/football-league-wonga-advertising>

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 4:19

<sup>9</sup> Danson A (2010) *Legal and regulatory update Sponsorship by gambling companies in the UK and Europe: The opportunities and challenges* Journal of Sponsorship 3: 2, 194 – 201

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sportingequals.org.uk/PICS/BME%20Final%20Full%20%20Report.pdf>

constant struggle to stay ahead of those who try to gain advantage through using banned substances. The use of drugs which could be used for medicinal purposes can also be problematic. There is a fine line between the legitimate use of physiological, technological and psychological strategies to gain advantage and those which infringe legal and morally acceptable practice. Using banned substances not only carries health risks for the competitor but also constitutes cheating. It brings disappointment to all who have supported the athlete, and disrespect to the very name of sport.

### 7.9 Sports, social justice and peace

7.9.1 At its best, sport can contribute to social justice, playing a valuable role in fostering inclusion and building strong community relationships. At its worst, it can divide and heighten tensions. Sport and education programmes have been involved in peace-making work in many places. Few political leaders have understood or been more committed to the potential of sport more than Nelson Mandela. Sport, Mandela said, “has the power... to unite people in a way that little else does.”<sup>11</sup> ‘It speaks to youth in a language they understand’ and “it can create hope where once there was only despair”.

7.9.2 In Scotland the ugly face of sectarianism has been associated with football, and a recent study conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that, despite significant progress made in past years, sport continues to face a number of challenges across member states related to racism and ethnic discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

### 7.10 Competing for time: Church or Sunday sport?

In the modern world much sport takes place on a Sunday, which raises issues for the church-going family. For some there is an intrinsic problem with playing sport on a Sunday. For others there is only a problem if there is

a clash with service times. Innovations such as Messy Church offer alternative ways for families to worship, as do mid-week services that may otherwise follow more traditional forms of worship.

### 7.11 Conclusion

7.11.1 Sport offers benefits for many aspects of life. In competitive sport as in all aspects of our lives, we are called to follow Jesus’ command to “Love your neighbour as yourself”<sup>13</sup> and to “do to others what you would have them do to you”<sup>14</sup>. Competitive sport can provide an arena for giving thanks to God for talents, opportunities to compete, and for relationships fostered through sport.

7.11.2 Competition involves *striving together* while also *striving against* one’s opponent. Playing against an opponent who is well matched pushes competitors to reach a higher level. It is when they “spur one another on toward love and good deeds ... .. encouraging one another”<sup>15</sup> that they can strive best together in competition. Much is lost when competition is seen solely as *striving against* others. In the true spirit of *striving together*, we should:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”<sup>16</sup>

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/2327308/Nelson-Mandela-plan-to-tap-into-TV-millions.html>

<sup>12</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/tk3209201\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/tk3209201_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 22:39

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 7:12

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 10:24

<sup>16</sup> Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>17</sup> Philippians 1:27

## 8. Families and the Church in the 21st century: the meaning of kinship bonds

The following report *Families and the Church in the 21st century: the meaning of kinship bonds* is a summary. The full report is available from the Church of Scotland General Assembly web pages – [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk) – and can be obtained in electronic format or paper copies, free of charge, by contacting the Church and Society offices on 0131 240 2275 or by e-mail from – [churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk)

### 8.1 Introduction – ‘a child of our own’

**8.1.1** This report explores the impact of the changing landscape of both adoption and fertility medicine on ideas of family, parenthood and kinship. Kinship, including the ways and contexts in which children are conceived and raised, and fertility medicine are evolving in new directions. The Church needs to be sensitive to these new developments.

**8.1.2** The realities of family relationships within Scottish society have changed profoundly over the past few decades. The availability of assisted conception means that children born may have parents responsible for their care who are distinct from their biological parents. Meanwhile, children offered for adoption are no longer typically healthy infants given up at birth, but may be older children from homes affected by alcohol, drugs or other social problems.

**8.1.3** The Christian faith offers a view of kinship and identity which can speak to and transcend family structures. A deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding kinship bonds and parents’ desire for ‘a child of their own’ can enable us, as a church, to better support the families and individuals in our congregations and communities.

### 8.2 Traditional forms of kinship and relatedness

In some societies, only biologically related individuals are considered part of a family, while in other cultures all adults in a village are seen as being some kind of parent to all children. In Scottish society, ideas about kinship have developed and changed over time. Images such as

adoption and parenthood are also key in understanding the relationship of God to humanity. God desired us to be able to both acknowledge and to have a relationship of love with our creator. Similarly, human parents may seek to have some kind of ‘image’ of themselves in their child and, in return, be able to have a relationship with them. While the vast majority of human reproduction continues to take place by natural means, in a small but growing number technological assistance is sought. Although many reproductive technologies tend to focus on the fusing of gametes,<sup>18</sup> procreation is not simply about that act, but encompasses the wider issue of creating a whole human person, loved and cherished by God.

### 8.3 Changing technologies, changing society?

**8.3.1** New developments in reproductive technologies have brought an almost bewildering variety of new possibilities of bringing children into existence. Assisted reproduction techniques such as artificial insemination or *in vitro* fertilisation, can use the gametes (eggs or sperm) of the parents or donors. In some cases surrogate mothers carry the foetus to term before the child is raised by the intended parents.

**8.3.2** A prospective technique causing a considerable amount of controversy is maternal spindle transfer, as yet unlicensed for human application. In cases where the prospective mother carries genes for serious mitochondrial disease, the technique seeks to create embryos to whom two females contribute genetically. Concerns include worries about unexpected abnormalities in resulting children.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Gametes are a cell that fuses with another cell during fertilization (conception) in organisms which reproduce sexually. In species (such as humans) which produce two morphologically distinct types of gametes, and in which each individual produces only one type, a female is any individual that produces the larger type of gamete – called an ovum (or egg) – and a male produces the smaller tadpole-like type – called a sperm.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Reinhardt K, DK Dowling and EH Morrow: “Mitochondrial Replacement, Evolution, and the Clinic” (Science 341: 1345-1346 (2013))

**8.3.3** In a society impacted by changing technologies and by evolving concepts of family structure, an increasing number of children have several different kinds of parents. Kinship is thus evolving in new directions.

#### **8.4 Conflicting interpretations of parenthood**

**8.4.1** The question of who are a child's 'real' parents may be complex. For example, in a couple who choose to use donated sperm, the non-genetic parent may feel less involved because they are 'only' the social parent. In gestational surrogacy<sup>20</sup> a woman carries and delivers a genetically unrelated child for another couple or person. The child shares most biological nutrients and other fluids with the surrogate mother – but no genes. On the other hand, in full (or traditional) surrogacy the surrogate provides the egg and gestates the child, so she shares genes with the child. Her biological relatedness with the child may be played down in favour of a more social aspect of parenthood.

##### **8.4.2 Biological factors**

Historically, shared blood has been one of the most common ways of expressing kinship. Connection through a biological substance originating in another person may constitute a basis for kinship. Genes can be used to understand genetic relatedness and the passing on of certain concepts of identity. Genes do not always have the same connotation as blood in its representation of life and its transmission. In modern understanding, genes and blood have different but overlapping meanings.

##### **8.4.3 Non-biological factors**

Ultimately, identity includes all social relationships. Kinship can arise from the potentially very strong relationships which are formed with others – including adoptive parents, or members of a community. Within the Church, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a profound expression of our being 'one body in Christ'. The sharing

<sup>20</sup> Surrogacy is an arrangement in which a woman carries and delivers a child for another couple or person. The surrogate may be the child's genetic mother (called traditional surrogacy), or she may be genetically unrelated to the child (called gestational surrogacy).

in the same loaf of bread and cup of wine expresses the reality that all share kinship as sisters and brothers in Christ; our kinship includes aspects beyond the physical. This is what should be experienced in the Christian Church whereby all members are kin in the fullest sense. The classical doctrine that God creates all things out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) emphasises that our existence is more than biological.

#### **8.5 Adoption**

##### **8.5.1 Introduction**

Adopted children are now generally considered in every way, including from a legal perspective, as the children of the adoptive parents.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis on adoptive parents being the parents, in the fullest sense, of the child is reflected in the Bible in the manner in which all people are God's, as described in Galatians 4: 4-8. Considering adopted children as the children in the fullest sense of the adoptive parents has a beautiful Biblical precedent.

##### **8.5.2 Adoption in Scotland**

Legislation<sup>22</sup> in 1930 for the first time transferred the legal rights to be recognised as the parent of the child from birth parents to adoptive parents. Broadly speaking there are three areas which have profoundly affected the number and circumstances of adoptions: developments in reproductive technologies, changes in societal views and the needs of children placed for adoption. Adoption within Scotland peaked between 1965 and 1970 at just over two thousand per year. A sharp decline in the number of adoptions was undoubtedly influenced by the 1967 Abortion Act. Adoption figures were at their lowest in 2002 (381) with a slight rise in 2010 to 466. These figures include step-parent adoptions, which account for about

<sup>21</sup> Marit Melhuus and Signe Howell, *Adoption and Assisted Conception: One Universe of Unnatural Procreation, An Examination of Norwegian Legislation*, In *European Kinship in the Age of Biotechnology*, Jeannette Edwards and Carles Salazar (eds.), Berghahn – Oxford, 2009, p 157

<sup>22</sup> The Adoption of Children Act 1926 (followed by The Adoption of Children (Scotland) Act (1930))



a quarter of this figure.<sup>23</sup> Until the 1950s the vast majority of children placed for adoption were 'relinquished babies', born to single women. By the late 1970s the focus had moved to finding homes for children who were 'in care' having been removed from their parents. Not only were children in need of adoption generally older, but some had siblings who needed to be placed with them; many had experienced neglect and abuse. From the 1990s there was a rise in the number of children whose parents misused drugs and/or alcohol.

### 8.5.3 Adoption today

In considering adoption as a way of forming a family, people find that they are being asked to consider giving a home to a toddler, or young child, to a sibling group or to children affected by drugs and/or alcohol. Some adopters find it hard to understand the level of difficulties that the children may have, or to anticipate or deal with the effect the children's difficulties may have upon them. Much has changed in society since the introduction of the 1930 legislation. The idea that children could easily be transplanted from one situation to another has given way to recognition of the patience, skill and compassion required to help children and their new families.

## 8.6 Family relationships in the Bible

**8.6.1** Within the Bible, there are accounts of a wide variety of family structures or kinship, and which function in many different ways. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, genealogies matter.<sup>24</sup> In Jesus' teaching, the parable of the prodigal son shows a loving parent, but also family tension and conflict,<sup>25</sup> while the call of Jesus to James and John pulls sons away from their obligations to their families.<sup>26</sup> In Jesus' own family life, Joseph is portrayed as an adoptive or social parent, rather than Jesus' biological parent.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/stats/ve-reftables-2011/ve11-t2-1.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38

<sup>25</sup> Luke 15:11-32

<sup>26</sup> Mark 1:19-20

<sup>27</sup> Luke 2:41-50, Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:-1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

**8.6.2** Beyond families, the Bible points to a more profound range of relationships, grounded in God's love. There is a kinship with all people, given particular expression in the Church. Thus, the Church family should be able to include all people, beyond any connection of ethnicity, blood or social ties. Everyone should be welcomed and valued, just as they are, and congregations should aim to be a real family to each other, with all the love, the joy and the challenge that brings.

**8.6.3** In the Church, this love is recognised or affirmed through baptism. For an adult it comes with a confession of faith but the Church of Scotland primarily practices infant baptism, where parents bring their child along to be welcomed into the family of the Church. With a little imagination there is much that can be done to welcome families of all shapes and sizes into the Church community.

**8.6.4** This common rebirth of the new Christians as children of God enables them to experience a new and very real family with a new parent in God and brothers and sisters. A Christian understanding of kinship within the Church can be far stronger than any biological, social or cultural ties.

**8.6.5** This understanding of Christian kinship, however, is often not experienced in many churches. The love that we should express towards others within the Church community, a love that comes from God, should never be considered inferior to the love shown to their biological family. The relationship of sacrificial love which exists between the members of the Christian church models a different, fuller kind of kinship.

## 8.7 Conclusion

**8.7.1** As this report has explored, our interconnectedness with others in relationships we regard as kin or family can be very complex. As assisted reproduction techniques develop, biological factors can connect children to a number of different people, who may or may not be involved in their upbringing. The Christian church should be able to offer the good news of welcome and kinship to all people, grounded in the love of God, shown to us in



Jesus. But we often fall short, and so there are a number of areas of particular challenge to the Church from this report.

**8.7.2** Given the ongoing development of knowledge and techniques in assisted reproduction, the Church must continue to engage with this area of medical research and development. The key role of the SRT Project in this is noted. As adoption has evolved over the generations, the Church and its members need to be aware of the changing expectations on adoptive parents, and the pressures on and experiences of those involved in adoption – parents and children. The Church as a whole, and congregations and members locally, should offer practical support and every encouragement to those who answer the call to foster or adopt.

**8.7.3** The Bible points to a kinship we all share as God's children. Created by God in God's image, unconditionally loved by God, reborn and made new in Christ, all people are welcomed into the family of God and the body of Christ, the Church. As such, our love and concern should reach beyond any biological kinship, to embrace all people – no matter their origins, upbringing, family contexts or relationships. This is not a new challenge, but it is certainly an ongoing challenge for us all.

## 9. Poverty and Economics

The following report *The impact of changes to the benefits system on the poorest in our communities* is a summary. The full report is available from the Church of Scotland General Assembly web pages – [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk) – and can be obtained in electronic format or paper copies, free of charge, by contacting the Church and Society offices on 0131 240 2275 or by e-mail from – [churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk)

### 9.1 The impact of changes to the benefits system on the poorest in our communities

**9.1.1** This report was requested by the 2013 General Assembly, which agreed to: 'Instruct the Church and Society Council, in consultation with the Social Care Council and the Priority Areas Committee, to assess the

impact of HMG's recent and pending changes for 2013 to the benefits system on the poorest in our communities and report on the same to the General Assembly of 2014.'

**9.1.2** The full report summarises the Church of Scotland's previous thinking and opinion on the issue and reiterates our commitment to supporting people who are marginalised, living in deprivation and in need of additional assistance to regain dignity and respect.

**9.1.3** The Gospel priority to the poor has underpinned the Church of Scotland's approach to the issue of national social security protection. This is seen especially in the Priority Areas Action Plan approved by the 2010 General Assembly, which recommitted the Church to working with a bias for those on the margins. Through the work of CrossReach the Church of Scotland has first-hand experience of working to care in Christ's name with people who are vulnerable. As one of the largest (and the most diverse, working across all eight categories of social care) non-governmental providers of social care in Scotland, CrossReach demonstrates the Church's clear commitment to service and care, as well as linking in the worshipping life of congregations and their prayers with the real social needs in our society. The work of the Church of Scotland in Priority Areas, those parishes in the most deprived areas of Scotland, also helps to bring to mind the reality of the situation which people face.

**9.1.4** We challenge the assertion that the goal of welfare reform should be to reduce the cost of the welfare system or to reduce dependency; dependency is a fact of life for us all, we all depend on one another. Poverty is not a consequence of dependency, nor will welfare reform by itself alleviate poverty.

**9.1.5** The full report outlines some of the recent changes to the benefits system, including:

- Benefits Up-rating Cap
- Benefits Cap
- Housing Benefit changes
- Social Fund / Scottish Welfare Fund changes

- Council Tax Benefit / Council Tax Reduction (Scotland) changes
- Child Benefit changes
- Disability Benefit changes

### 9.1.6 The impact on the poorest in our communities

**9.1.6.1** The best evidence is that tax and benefit changes will be the major driver of child poverty in the UK and Scotland in particular for the remainder of the decade. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated data to compare the impact of reforms with what might have happened if no changes had been made:<sup>28</sup>

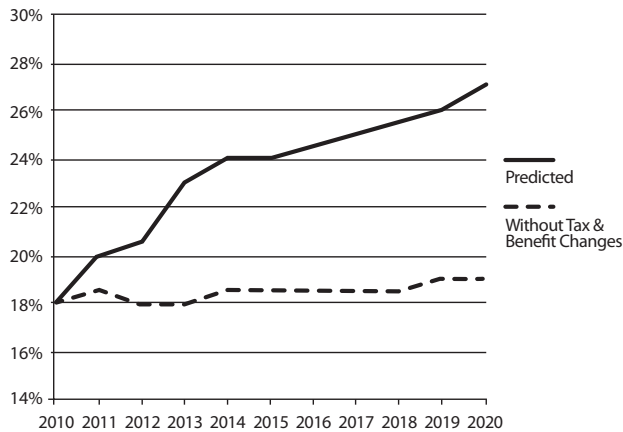


Table: Predictions of the proportion of children living in poverty 2010-2020. Institute for Fiscal Studies.

**9.1.6.2** The clear message from Priority Areas is that sanctions do not work; they only punish people who are the most vulnerable and there is the stigmatising effect of the changes combined. Glasgow's Food Bank Forum has heard suggestions that the vast majority of people who are accessing foodbanks have faced a benefit sanction or benefit delay. Instead of additional resources being given to the welfare budget at a time of massive reform, as predicted there have instead been swingeing cuts.

<sup>28</sup> IFS Report R78 May 2013 – data for this chart is for the UK as a whole <http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r78.pdf>

**9.1.6.3** The principle of having people in poverty involved at the heart of the process has been ignored by senior decision makers in the UK Government. The nature of changes are detached from the reality and experience of welfare recipients. Those formulating policy do not know what it is like to live in poverty, nor do they appreciate the budgetary pressures that universal credit will create. Four themes come across clearly:

- There is a stigma to being poor.
- There are costs to living in poverty – wellbeing, life expectancy, achievement – but also it simply costs more to run an electricity meter, to not be able to buy goods in bulk at a discount.
- In-work poverty is real and widespread.
- Cuts to benefits and the imposition of sanctions are divisive and are causing the poorest to be ever more vulnerable.

**9.1.6.4** Many people who receive benefits have reported damage to their confidence and self-esteem, due to the indignity and stigma of blame used by many politicians and the media, and even some Job Centre staff. Changes to the introduction of reforms, for instance the timeline for the introduction of Universal Credit, is confusing and worrying for many people. It is becoming clear that some of the changes will not solve all the problems they are intended to. The 'spare room subsidy' / 'bedroom tax', for instance, may end up costing Government more as pressures on homelessness and social care services increase. Many of the changes will create expensive and painful societal problems for years to come. A new system of monthly payments is likely to lead to an increase in rent arrears, debt and evictions. To their credit some Scottish local authorities, such as Dundee City Council, are opting not to evict on the basis of rent arrears accrued because of the 'spare room subsidy' / 'bedroom tax'. We should all be aware of the interconnectedness of issues facing those in poverty. The Poverty Truth Commissioners see no positives in the welfare changes. They recommend that a fundamental change is needed to place people with experience of poverty as active participants in the solution. The poor should not be seen simply as a problem to be dealt with.

**9.1.6.5** Some key issues raised by CrossReach, the Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland, are:

- The 'spare room subsidy' / 'bedroom tax' – Around 95,000<sup>29</sup> social households in Scotland are currently 'under occupied'. In Edinburgh there is a shortfall of 900 one-bedroom properties. The Scottish Government has said that "there is no feasible way for the majority of those under-occupying social housing to find social housing of the right size."<sup>30</sup>
- Rent Arrears – CrossReach expects that increased rent arrears will lead to evictions in many cases, and therefore an increase in homelessness. The effect will be felt most on CrossReach's homelessness services which will see an increase in demand. This will not be a spike on day one but, as arrears build up over time, more people will be made homeless and will require support.
- Local Authority Budgets – Extra costs for local authorities and charities dealing with the fallout from the reforms, added to the reduction in budgets means that social landlords, local government and others have less money to build new houses and provide other services.<sup>31</sup> Some local authorities are not planning to change their allocations policies to take account of the new rules, which means that people could be offered tenancies which they cannot afford.

### **9.1.7 The UK Government's response**

**9.1.7.1** The Church of Scotland wrote to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in preparation for this report. The DWP was asked about its evidence and analysis of the impact of the UK Government's changes to the benefits system on the poorest in our communities. The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, replied. In his letter he said: "It is too early to say what the impact of these changes will be." A copy of his reply is in the full report.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Scotland%20Policy%20Pdfs/Bedroom%20Tax/CIH\\_Bedroomtax\\_e.pdf](http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Scotland%20Policy%20Pdfs/Bedroom%20Tax/CIH_Bedroomtax_e.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1125/0115214.doc>  
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

### **9.1.8 What other Churches are saying**

**9.1.8.1** We are pleased to draw attention to the Church of England's General Synod paper *Welfare Reform and the Church* (GS1897).<sup>32</sup> It said: "the Church's commitment to a welfare state is not mere nostalgia. It is a theological judgement about what the state should be and should do for its citizens. Where the poor and vulnerable carry a disproportionate share of the burden created by the financial crisis, something is wrong."

**9.1.8.2** The Church has for many years held the view that the primary aim of the welfare system is to enhance human dignity for all. Social security is a national safety net which enables every citizen to be able to live life in all its fullness. We will continue to insist that the consideration of welfare policy should be characterised by principles of fairness and compassion. The UK Government has worked to reduce expenditure on welfare and benefits. This is a wrong priority. The conclusions of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity included a call for a reduction in inequality; this should be the measure of a successful economic and fiscal programme. To this end we will continue to urge the UK Government to be more compassionate in helping those in most need, for instance by increasing benefits by at least the rate of inflation, to cease penalising social housing tenants who may have a spare room, by increasing the minimum wage to a living wage. Alongside all of this we will continue to expose the myths and lies told about poverty which continue to denigrate and stigmatise people for their poverty.

**9.1.8.3** *Nothing about us without us is for us.* This is the important message which the Church is embracing from Scotland's Poverty Truth Commission. The importance of involving people in the decisions which affect them most can never be understated. It is especially true in welfare, where the decisions are too often taken by affluent politicians whose daily lives are so far removed

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1782996/gs%201897%20-%20welfare%20reform%20and%20the%20church.pdf>

from the lived experience of what it means to be poor. The Church has in the past been associated with a call to devolve welfare to Holyrood. With the outcome of the referendum uncertain (and the Church of Scotland remaining impartial), in the event of a 'No' vote we would urge speedy consideration of devolving social security as a future change to the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

**9.1.8.4** Most important of all, Church members should commend and pray for those churches and individuals that are involved in the provision of emergency food aid for those in need. It is a shocking indictment that in our wealthy nation there is an increasing reliance on foodbanks. As Christians we are encouraged to act for justice as well as to show charity; the Church of Scotland, along with its ecumenical and other partners, will continue to work to tackle the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty.

## **9.2 Scottish churches' responses to welfare reform**

**9.2.1** The impact of welfare reforms on the most vulnerable in society is dramatic, and for many people the need is urgent and real. Many are facing questions about whether to eat or heat, about how to survive when increases in wages or support are smaller than inflation and issues about access to affordable credit. In our churches and our neighbourhoods many more are hearing and sharing stories of how people in jobs still struggle to make ends meet and do anything other than survive, let alone live.

**9.2.2** In the summer and autumn of 2013 the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office invited responses to an online survey to try to document and analyse what churches were doing in response to desperate social need. This was done to gather some hard evidence and to look for some common threads which could help in determining policy positions, as well as motivating and encouraging local congregations to continue to respond to the needs and priorities of their communities.

**9.2.3** The full briefing on Scottish churches' responses to welfare reform can be found on the website of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office <http://www.actsparl.org/briefing-papers/15-3-scottishchurchesresponseswelfarereform.aspx>

**9.2.4** The survey was open for 6 weeks, and 256 responses were submitted. Of these, 151 were completed with consent given to use the information; the report provides a small snapshot of activity. Of the 151 completed responses, the majority were completed by Church of Scotland congregations (130). Other traditions represented were Episcopal Church (4), Methodist Church (3), Baptist Union of Scotland (2), Congregational Federation (2), Salvation Army (1), United Free Church (1), United Reformed Church (1), Associated Presbyterian Churches (1), and the Religious Society of Friends (1). Two Local Ecumenical Partnership churches responded, and one Unitarian congregation. The geographical spread of responses was good, with responses from churches in 30 of Scotland's 32 local authorities.

**9.2.5 Why are churches involved?** Through a qualitative analysis of the responses given to the question 'Why is your church involved in providing this assistance?', a number of trends appeared:

**9.2.5.1 A Christian response to social need** – The terms 'mission', 'outreach' and 'witness' appeared relatively frequently in this section. Below are some quotes which explain the unconditional commitment to social action:

- "Because we care for our neighbours, no matter who they are. We are all God's children and should want to help our brothers and sisters who are in need."
- "There is significant need within the communities in which we work and we see this as a practical expression of the Christian gospel."
- "Simple...read the story of The Good Samaritan. We strive to show God's love through practical support by serving in our communities."
- "Compassion according to [Matthew] 25:35."

**9.2.5.2 Responding to growing unmet needs in local community** – Some of the answers related to recent economic effects:

- “It was felt that there was local need to provide this form of back-up as the new welfare reforms took effect.”
- “Members are very conscious of the effects of the economic situation in an area with high levels of unemployment and deprivation.”
- “Rise in food theft crime in area prompted food initiative.”
- “Government policy is squeezing vulnerable people’s budgets to the extent that they have to make tough economical home decisions.”

**9.2.5.3** The majority, however, referred to a more general sense of unmet or increasing need within their community. Interestingly, only one respondent explicitly stated that those whom they are helping may be from within their own congregation.

**9.2.5.4 Partnership, ecumenism and lending a hand to neighbours** – The trend immediately apparent on reading through the responses is that partnership working is central to many of the projects reported. The majority of respondents report that they work with others; nearly half work alongside local community / health / local authority partners, but even more report working with neighbouring churches and the local Christian community.

**9.2.5.5** Several responses indicate that churches had been directly approached by a neighbouring church to become involved. Several churches noted that where there had been an established project already set up, other churches in the local area which had not perhaps given active support before are beginning to lend their support, or are getting more involved.

**9.2.5.6** One response also highlights that different types of assistance are all valuable:

- “Members acknowledge the need in our community for this help and this is something our ageing congregation is able to do.”

**9.2.5.7 Churches can offer space** – Church premises are obviously considered valuable community assets, with many references to the use of buildings to facilitate other organisations’ work in addition to the Church’s own work. Churches report being used as:

- Accommodation for night shelters/drop-ins for the homeless.
- Accommodation for support groups of various types.

## **9.2.6 Social Action Projects**

**9.2.6.1 Projects that provide food** – Most respondents who completed the survey reported offering some sort of assistance with food provision: 123 of 151 respondents (81%). Some churches identify organising a project in their own church, but the vast majority of churches report that they contribute goods or volunteers (or both) to another project.

**9.2.6.2** Most of the projects which are reported in this category are projects which provide emergency food provision: foodbanks, food parcels *etc.* This usually consists of a collection of non-perishable items which are then distributed as emergency food parcels. Many of those who are involved in foodbanks reported that the services are provided to people who present a voucher, which will have been handed to them by Jobcentre Plus, a healthcare worker, or other statutory agency. The majority of the foodbanks identified report that they are operating within this voucher-led system, and many of them are organised under the Trussell Trust franchise model. Churches around Scotland are therefore already very involved in the running (and supplying) of foodbanks which are being relied upon by local and national government agencies to be there to support people in times of need.

**9.2.6.3** Nonetheless, there is a sizeable proportion of foodbanks reported here which do not report requiring a voucher: an indication, perhaps, of another group of foodbanks which have been set up independently from the franchise model. For an interesting example of a foodbank that has been set up ‘independently’, with around 20 partners, in a community led by a church: see

this blog about the Greater Maryhill Foodbank: [http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/priority\\_areas/2013/10/09/the-road-less-taken-greater-maryhill-foodbank/](http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/priority_areas/2013/10/09/the-road-less-taken-greater-maryhill-foodbank/)

**9.2.6.4** There are also a number of churches preparing cooked food; this is mostly seen in the form of community cafes, which offer cheap or free cooked food and an opportunity for people to gather together. The churches which run these projects report that the chance for fellowship and a space for people to chat is a key aspect to this type of service.

**9.2.6.5** A few other projects also stood out as particularly innovative responses to locally identified need:

- Providing hot meals during the school summer holidays to children who are in receipt of free school meals during term time.
- A project which encourages cookery skills, particularly with vulnerable families. The emphasis is on promoting positive lifestyles and increased physical and mental well-being.
- Cheap fruit and veg being sold in the church, making fresh produce more affordable (most foodbanks distribute non-perishable items).

**9.2.6.6 Providing material needs, for example clothing or household goods** – Just under half of the responses to the survey also reported that they supplied other material items, excluding food, to people in need. Here the most commonly observed model is that of ‘starter packs’, which comprises a pack of essential household items to people who are moving into new accommodation, often after a period of homelessness. Again, similarly to foodbanks, many of the projects which were identified are accessed using a statutory referral system (a voucher system).

**9.2.6.7 Homelessness (including shelters and befriending projects)** – Much of the information provided in this section overlapped with the information given in the category above. However, here there are a number of churches which contribute goods or volunteers to already-established projects; Bethany Christian Trust and the Lodging House Mission are two notably mentioned projects in this category.

**9.2.6.8 Debt advice, budgeting skills or credit unions** –

A far smaller proportion of our respondents indicated that they had any involvement in projects within this category: 20 reported that they are engaged in work in this area, and this is evenly split between churches which run their own projects and churches which provide volunteers or premises. Christians Against Poverty courses and advice services are the most common way in which churches are involved in debt advice services, though some respondents reported a close working relationship with other organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureaux. A few respondents indicated that individual members of their congregation had the relevant expertise to be in a position to offer advice on budgeting skills. Others reported having members who had taken the time to complete courses on giving advice, such as completing training with Christians Against Poverty to become a money coach.

**9.2.6.9 Mental health services (including counselling)** –

Far fewer respondents offered examples of projects within this category, but within this category, the following projects were identified: dementia support groups, bereavement support, and support for mothers with post-natal depression. Some churches also reported the use of their premises by external service providers who offer these services.

**9.2.6.10 Access to computers and / or computing skills**

– This is a category in which there were relatively few responses, and indeed only one of the respondents who indicated that their church offered access to computers or computing skills made any mention of this when asked to further describe the project. In light of the ‘Digital by Default’ aspiration which will lead to the majority of the welfare and benefits system requiring to be administered by claimants online, this is an area in which churches (not just through their premises, but also the expertise of those in their congregation) may be able to make a significant difference in their communities.



## 9.2.7 Pastoral Care

**9.2.7.1** For those who have pastoral care responsibilities within their church, there were some additional questions which sought to find out whether there had been a discernible rise in people approaching churches with problems related to changes to the welfare and benefits system. Of those who reported that they had noticed an increase, around half reported that concerns about the current welfare system, benefit sanctions and changes to disability benefits were on people's minds. However, the most significant issue was the 'bedroom tax' which is causing much anxiety. In this section, people who have responsibility for pastoral care in churches recorded their experience of more people presenting at churches asking for money; a growing number of people struggling with benefit sanctions imposed and causing hardship, and the worry of the new assessment process for accessing disability benefit. One respondent noted that there had been a shift because "before, people were very reluctant to speak openly".

**9.2.7.2** When placed in a situation where someone asks for help, the majority of our respondents in this section, however, did not feel equipped to be able to give practical assistance. Things that they would welcome to feel better equipped include:

- "How to access emergency money, who to contact about housing issues, Social Work department ... How to access help without dropping people into more trouble."
- "Clear information as to the facts not political fudge."
- "Money! A bit facetious perhaps but true!"

**9.2.7.3** However, those who did feel more confident to offer help reported their useful sources of information as including:

- "Hamilton CAB offered excellent introductory sessions on Welfare Reform."
- "Knowledge of local helping agencies; a listing of agencies researched and provided by myself to presbytery; personal contact with leaders of such help agencies."

- "Faith in Community Dundee leaflet."
- "We have held information evenings run by the local authority."

**9.2.7.4** Perhaps these provide some ways of equipping people with knowledge, which tackles at least some of the barriers that others have faced in offering help.

## 9.2.8 Campaigning

**9.2.8.1** The majority of respondents reported that they have not undertaken any campaigning in relation to alleviating social need – or the welfare reforms more specifically. Within the group of respondents who reported that they have not campaigned, several potential barriers to participation were identified. The most commonly given reason is a lack of information, with people saying that before they would campaign they would require:

- "Information that tells us how individuals are affected by changes in the welfare system."
- "Better communication by the campaigners."
- "More information on how to go about campaigning about this issue. As far as I can see at present the issue of poverty is a major growing concern for all."

**9.2.8.2** Many respondents indicated that whilst the congregation may seem generally willing, there were practical difficulties in getting involved: geographical location (some rural congregations felt too remote to participate); ageing congregations; a lack of willing volunteers to take on the initial engagement to get others in the church involved. Others, however, noted that the link between churches and campaigning was not necessarily clear, and this may cause people to be hesitant in their approach:

- "Maybe causes specifically promoted through presbytery or spoken about during worship would encourage people to pay more attention and see participation as an opportunity to show the love of Christ to others."
- "A greater visibility of churches on demos would help provide a clear lead against those who do not wish the Church to appear. Where are the church banners on anti-cuts demos? I hope the current Mission Action



Plan for our diocese will result in a greater sense of the possibility and responsibility to help the homeless and those without food."

- "A personal pulpit appeal, relevant to our community and without a political agenda."

**9.2.8.3** One respondent noted that their efforts were focused on service delivery: "We are a hands-on organisation, we are working in the community and are still unsure of the benefits to our clients of campaigning." Others noted that whilst they regularly pray for the situations they witness in their local projects, they do not campaign as a congregation. However, for those who have campaigned, the overall experience was seen to be positive; respondents who had directly used their experience of being involved in local projects felt that it both enhanced their own understanding of the issues at hand, which in turn made them feel better informed to engage in campaigning and influencing decision-makers. One respondent noted that the experience gained from doing community work "provides credibility" to the responses made by their church to Government consultations on issues of social justice and welfare. In another case, the commitment to eradicate poverty was a long-standing campaigning 'ask', but the involvement in a local project has cemented that project in a tangible way: "Our involvement ... has given an expression to our commitment to help eradicate poverty in the UK."

**9.2.8.4** This may provide some reassurance to those who may feel concerned about the interaction between service delivery and campaigning activity. Additionally, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office has a leaflet called Making a Difference: How to Lobby, which may offer some pointers for church groups or individuals looking to get started in contacting decision-makers. It is also possible to arrange for a speaker to come to your church group and run a workshop on the content of this leaflet.

## 9.2.9 Conclusions

**9.2.9.1** The general overview of the survey demonstrates that there are many examples of good work going on in

Scotland in offering assistance to those who need it. This assistance is made increasingly necessary by a growing number of people in local congregations and the wider community requiring assistance, partly because of the generally poorer economic situation; and partly due to the changes to the welfare benefits system which are now beginning to take effect.

**9.2.9.2** However, the provision of services is only one side of the coin. Tackling the underlying reasons which cause the need for foodbanks, homeless shelters and crisis assistance is also crucial. This survey has demonstrated that the lack of information is often cited as a barrier to people taking more decisive campaigning action. However, the importance of local-led activity has been a strong theme coming out of this survey, and so it may be possible for churches working together at a local level to pool resources, not only in serving their local communities through practical action, but in speaking out against systemic injustices within society.

## 9.3 Priority Areas Action Plan – Interim Report

**9.3.1** The Church and Society Council works closely with the Priority Areas Committee. Our work on credit unions, prison visitor centres, welfare reform and tackling poverty and injustice are some of the many issues which we have worked on in partnership and consultation with them over the past year. The Church and Society Council welcomes the interim report of the Priority Areas Action Plan *Hope and Pain in an Age of Fragility* and is committed to working with the Priority Areas Committee and all other partners to continue to implement and develop its work.

## 9.4 Scottish Leaders Group on Welfare Reform

**9.4.1** Citizens Advice Scotland has convened a new group of leading figures in Scottish civic life to consider issues around welfare reform. The Church of Scotland's General Assembly Moderator and Convener of the Church and Society Council have been invited to join the group. We hope that it will be a useful opportunity for networking, sharing ideas and co-ordinating joint action and response to social need.

## 9.5 Food security

“Scotland – a small, wealthy, well-governed country blessed with some productive soils and plenty of water, with skilled farmers and fishers, world-leading science and a strong social fabric. And foodbanks. And a population which dies on average four years younger than the European average, with huge inequalities across Scotland.”

Nourish Scotland 2013 [www.nourishscotland.org.uk](http://www.nourishscotland.org.uk)

**9.5.1** The General Assembly received a report on food and agriculture in 2012 called *Give us our daily bread*.<sup>33</sup> Last year the General Assembly instructed the Council to investigate the issue of food security in Scotland and report to the General Assembly of 2016.

**9.5.2** Food security is a subject that concerns everybody in Scotland. As indicated in the survey results above (section 9.2) many churches have responded by providing foodbanks. In December 2013, the Trussell Trust alone listed 45 of its foodbanks were in operation or in development across Scotland. Churches have been active partners in many of these, as well as in supporting other community food provision initiatives. This is a huge commitment to practical action by congregations who are to be commended for this practical expression of Christian charity. At the same time many people involved in foodbanks recognise that this cannot be a long term solution to food poverty, food security or poor diet and there are a number of projects examining how food security can be developed in the long term.

**9.5.3** One such initiative which the Church and Society Council is supporting is a project led by the Iona Community called *The Poverty Premium Project*, which also has support from the Scottish Episcopal Church, Church Action on Poverty and Christian Aid. *The Poverty Premium Project* is examining how local food projects can help alleviate food poverty and is working with Eco-

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/9590/Our\\_daily\\_bread\\_report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/9590/Our_daily_bread_report_2012.pdf)

Congregation Scotland to publish new ideas for action on food and agriculture.

**9.5.4** Food poverty is not just a physical issue, but relates to self-worth and spiritual well-being. How can those who do not live in food poverty listen to those who do? Our response to food poverty and insecurity should take us beyond charity. It is primarily a justice issue. We need to address the tension that exists between saying ‘we have to have foodbanks because people are hungry’ and asking ‘why are they hungry?’

## 9.6 Tax, giving and wealth sharing – on the use of money and the common weal

**9.6.1** The Council has established a working group looking at issues of tax, personal giving and community wealth sharing, and aims to report on the subject to the General Assembly in 2015. Last year’s Assembly asked the Council to look at the concept of a Citizens’ Income, and consideration of this idea will also be part of this report. The group aims to build on the work of the Church’s 2012 Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity, and is keen to engage with interested groups in and outwith the Church. We are grateful to the co-operation of the Stewardship department for their interest and support in the development of our thinking about use of money, particularly within the Church. The group has also had very positive engagement with Christian Aid Scotland and the Jimmy Reid Foundation’s Common Weal Project. Regardless of the outcome of the referendum in September, there will be changes to the way tax is raised in Scotland.

## 9.7 The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty

**9.7.1** The General Assembly welcomed and commended the report published in March 2013 *The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty*<sup>34</sup> (produced jointly with the Methodist Church, United

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/14051/Truth-And-Lies-Report.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/14051/Truth-And-Lies-Report.pdf)

Reformed Church and Baptist Union of Great Britain). The Church and Society Council has continued to participate in joint action aimed at political and media leaders who misuse statistics or stigmatise people who live in poverty or are in receipt of benefits for populist political advantage. This has included co-signing joint letters to the UK Government, co-ordinating the publications and resources for churches and sharing news and information between the partner churches about how the report was being received in different places. The Convener has met with MSPs and the Church and Society Council has run several events on the theme of the report in local congregations and Presbyteries. In December 2013 the Church in Wales and Oxfam Wales commissioned a Welsh language translation and the report will be the subject of a debate in the Welsh Assembly.

**9.7.2** Although the report is now over a year old, it is still generating interest and the ideas it promotes about truth-telling and dignity are ones which need to be continually re-affirmed. With the referendum on independence in 2014, the UK General Election in 2015 and a Holyrood Election in 2016, the next two years will be particularly important to make sure that poverty is not used as a political football by politicians fighting to blame others rather than the economic system for the scandalous levels of inequality and deprivation in Britain today.

## **9.8 Funeral poverty**

**9.8.1** The issue of funeral poverty was highlighted at the General Assembly 2013, and the Society, Religion and Technology Project was instructed to examine some of the issues in more detail. There are a number of aspects to the issue, including a perception that many local authorities have sharply increased charges relating to burial or cremation in the past few years. The Society, Religion and Technology Project sought information from all Scottish local authorities on their charges for these services in 2008, 2010 and 2013. We found that, in many cases, there had indeed been a significant increase in these charges. In some areas charges had increased by almost 300% in the past 5 years. The average increase for both internment and

cremation across the country was found to be 62% from 5 years ago, with a 36% increase in the past 3 years.

**9.8.2** Another aspect of the cost of funerals is the charges made by funeral directors which in some cases have increased very significantly in the past 12 months. Along with our colleagues in the Ministries Council, we have sought to meet with representatives of the funeral directors, to discuss some of the issues raised. In addition, our colleagues in the Ministries Council have been preparing a leaflet for parish ministers, to make clear what they can offer to families and funeral directors at the time of bereavement.

**9.8.3** A third aspect has been the practical ways in which local congregations can offer assistance. We have come across a number of instances where funeral teas are offered through the congregation. These can often be hosted in the church hall and catering provided by members of the congregation. As a result, this service can be provided at a significantly lower price than might have been the case had the funeral tea been provided by a hotel, for example. While this may be a small amount in comparison to the overall cost of the funeral, many families appreciate the provision of this service.

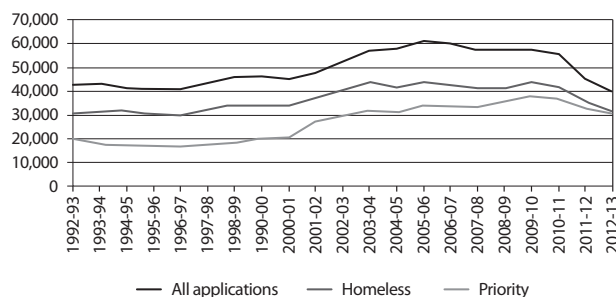
## **9.9 Payday lending**

**9.9.1** In 2012 the General Assembly called for a ceiling 40% to be set on the APR allowed to be charged for personal credit. Since then we have been working with a number of agencies to seek to have this limit taken seriously. In November 2013, the Chancellor indicated that the Banking Reform Bill would contain just such a provision, and the new Financial Conduct Authority has indicated it is prepared to use its regulatory powers and authority in a way which would stop extortionate and inappropriate practice. George Osborne has announced that it is now UK Government policy to introduce a legal cap on the cost of payday loans. During the year the Council has also signed up, on behalf of the Church of Scotland, to a 'Charter to Stop the Payday Loan Rip-off', proposed by a coalition of consumer affairs, debt advice

and anti-poverty charities, supported by a cross-party group of MPs. For more information see a report by Church Action on Poverty at <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/drowningindebt/paydayloanreport/>

## 9.10 Homelessness in Scotland

**9.10.1** In the year of the 2012 'homelessness target', the Scottish Government reported a continuing drop in homelessness applications. 39,827 households were recorded as applying to their local authority for help with homelessness in 2012-13. This was a drop of 13% on the previous year, representing a return to the levels experienced during the mid-1990s. This table shows the number of applications and assessments under the homelessness legislation, 1992-2013 (source – Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2012-13, Scottish Government).



**9.10.2** The homelessness target was set in 2002: within 10 years, almost all applicants were to be treated as in priority need – previously, people who were not considered vulnerable were given lower priority. The Scottish Government announced in early 2013 that the target had been met. The drop in applications is put down to a new approach by local authorities, which means a 'housing options' interview is carried out with each applicant, reviewing possible alternatives. This means that making a homelessness application is now more an action of last resort if other options cannot be found, or prove unsuccessful.

**9.10.3** The central strategy on homelessness relies on considerable effort by charities and other voluntary organisations, among whom the churches feature prominently. Organisations such as Glasgow Lodging House Mission, CrossReach, Bethany Christian Trust and other church-based groups help prevent homelessness as well as helping those who fall through the safety net.

**9.10.4** The drop in the headline rate of homelessness is encouraging, but there are fears for particular groups. People with multiple problems compounding their homelessness – such as drug or alcohol abuse, a history of being abused, or mental illness – are finding it increasingly difficult. People with complex problems are less well served by the housing options approach. There are reports that rough sleeping among such groups may be increasing.

**9.10.5** Underlying the overall picture are two key features:

- The continuing shortage in supply of affordable homes for rent, which for most represent the route out of homelessness.
- The negative impacts of the UK coalition's policies on social security, particularly the 'bedroom tax' and sanctions on work-seekers.

**9.10.6** Scottish Churches Housing Action, which brings together the main Christian bodies including the Church of Scotland, will celebrate its 20th anniversary on 17 January 2015. The starter packs movement, led by Scottish Churches Housing Action, has projects in most major towns and cities, often serving the rural areas around them. It has the support of the Guild through the Julius Project, which develops befriending schemes for homeless people. Its new charity, Whitebeam Homes, is addressing the shortage of affordable rented housing, and it is establishing supported lodgings, to be piloted in Scottish Borders, to help young people at risk of homelessness.

### 9.11 Credit unions

9.11.1 Over the past year the Church of Scotland has been working with the Church of England in establishing a Churches Mutual Credit Union and has contributed a £20,000 grant to the project. Other UK Churches have also expressed an interest in being part of this group. The Church of Scotland is grateful to the Scottish Government for its support for this work; they have seconded a full-time staff member for six months to be involved in the negotiations and implementation of the work around Credit Unions. The Church and Society Council has also been encouraging congregations and church members to consider how they might get involved with and support their local Credit Union.

### 9.12 Living wage

9.12.1 The General Assembly has acknowledged the importance of a Living Wage (£7.45 per hour) and has called for the National Minimum Wage (£6.31 for adults) to be raised to the rate of the Living Wage. The Church and Society Council has supported the Scottish Living Wage Campaign in its promotion in and outwith the Church. A toolkit for congregations is available on the Church of Scotland website and further advice can be obtained from the Church and Society staff members. The Council is continuing to explore and work with others to push for change in European legislation relating to the tendering process for public procurement, which is one of the main barriers that is preventing the Church of Scotland from becoming a living wage employer.

### 9.13 Financial education

9.13.1 The Church of Scotland's Society, Religion and Technology Project has been working with the Financial Education Partnership. The SRT Project is looking at ways in which the material produced by the Financial Education Partnership for use in schools could be adapted for use in congregations and other church groups.

### 9.14 Ethical investment

9.14.1 The Church and Society Council, through the Society, Religion and Technology Project, has continued

to support National Ethical Investment Week. Along with a number of other organisations, the SRT Project has been involved in developing materials for use in congregations to highlight the week, which takes place each year in October (19-25 Oct 2014). In 2013 this included the production of worship and other resources which were available through the Church of Scotland Starters for Sunday web page. A day conference encouraging participation in National Ethical Investment Week will be organised for Saturday 4 October 2014. Please see the SRT Project website ([www.srtp.org.uk](http://www.srtp.org.uk)) for further details.

## 10. Societal issues

### 10.1 Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice/Community Justice

10.1.1 Over the past year the Board has further developed proposals to improve its impact, including changing the constitution and membership to more clearly reflect the purpose of the Board. One of the amendments which the Board has proposed is to change its name to 'Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Community Justice'. The members believe that this change is an important one which reflects the faith communities' belief that all human beings are of equal value and that society is not divided into two unequally valued groups – the criminals and the law abiding. The change also signifies that the Board believes that the ways through which criminal activity will be reduced are to be found within communities and their attitudes and not in punitive measures. The changes to the constitution will allow the Board to widen its focus and to look beyond the criminal justice system to consider what society requires to do to tackle the causes of criminality. The new constitution is presented to the General Assembly (available online at the General Assembly web page [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/general\\_assembly](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/general_assembly) or from the Church and Society office) for approval. In the meantime the Board has continued to respond to consultations and to instigate discussion on various issues and aspects of community justice. For a list of all consultations which the Church of Scotland has been associated with in 2013 see section 14.4.

## 10.2 Prison visitor centres

**10.2.1** The Council's work to support the development of prison visitor centres continues to grow. The Church and Society Council hosts, chairs and provides administrative support for the National Prisons Visitor Centre Steering Group. This is a wide-ranging partnership of charities and public sector bodies committed to supporting the creation and improvement of prison visitor centres in all of Scotland's prisons.

**10.2.2** The Steering Group has reached agreement to develop a new visitor centre in Polmont Young Offenders Institution through a Public Service Partnership with the Scottish Prison Service. A coordinator for this project is now employed by the Church on behalf of the Steering Group. Funding for this project has come from the Scottish Government's Early Years Change fund. It is a sign of the developing understanding of the potential for prison visitor centres to bring about transformational change that the money has come from a department not directly connected to criminal justice.

**10.2.3** Part of this project is to work with the five existing centres (at Cornton Vale, Barlinnie, Addiwell, Perth and Saughton) to develop and agree a set of standards and evaluation processes which will underpin the strategy to develop prison visitor centres in all 17 prisons in Scotland. It is hoped that further money will become available in the coming year for new centres and it is important that a coherent evaluation and evidence strategy is in place to ensure the long term sustainability of this work.

## 10.3 End of life issues

**10.3.1** 2013 saw a number of legal challenges in the courts, and also political attempts in both the Scottish and UK Parliaments, to change the law to allow 'assisted dying' in the UK. The Church of Scotland, in common with most major UK Churches and Christian organisations, continues to oppose any such change to the legal position. Although it is clear that many individuals and families face difficult decisions at the end of life, the Church has expressed concern about the effect any such change would have on

the way society views the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society, and has urged the provision of better resources for palliative care.

## 10.4 Infant ashes inquiries

**10.4.1** In 2013 two separate inquiries were established to investigate the issues around infant cremation, following revelations that families had for many years been told that there are no remains after infant cremation when in fact this is not the case. Parents, health care workers, chaplains and others will have made decisions or passed on information in good faith, and the news of the infant ashes stories will no doubt have stirred up grief and memories for many families.

**10.4.2** Lord Bonomy has been chairing the Infant Cremation Commission, appointed by the Scottish Government, and Dame Elish Angiolini has been chairing an investigation into Mortonhall crematorium in Edinburgh. The Moderator of the General Assembly 2013-14, Rt Rev Lorna Hood, has had personal experience of the issue having been a chaplain at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, where her work involved pastoral support with women and families who had lost babies or suffered miscarriages. In 2013 the Moderator spoke with both Lord Bonomy as well as Dame Elish to offer them both her personal insight as a chaplain as well as the support of the Church for their work. An issue as sensitive and delicate as this does need to be honestly faced, and people need to hear the truth of what has happened. If the Church, locally or national can do anything to facilitate people coming to terms with what many of us find inexplicable, it needs to be ready to serve.

## 10.5 Sectarianism

**10.5.1** The Church and Society Council reported on the issue of Sectarianism in 2012.<sup>35</sup> In 2013 the Council published a discussion starter leaflet on the issue for use by small groups and congregations wishing to explore

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/9591/Sectarianism\\_final.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/9591/Sectarianism_final.pdf)



some of the issues further. The Council has noted and welcomed the following developments in 2013:

- A Place for Hope ([www.placeforhope.org.uk](http://www.placeforhope.org.uk)), a not-for-profit organisation set up by the Church of Scotland, published a report in June called *Responding to Sectarianism*.<sup>36</sup>
- Faith in Community Scotland ([www.faithincommunity.scotland.org](http://www.faithincommunity.scotland.org)) was awarded funding from the Scottish Government to continue their work in this area, which will involve work with 8-10 communities a year over the next two years, supporting them to develop their own asset-based responses to tackling sectarianism together.
- Other recipients of Government funding including Bridging the Gap, the Iona Community, A Place for Hope, and Just Festival.
- YouthLink Scotland has launched a one-stop shop website for people working to tackle sectarianism, from voluntary groups to statutory agencies and schools. *Action on Sectarianism* ([www.actiononsectarianism.info](http://www.actiononsectarianism.info)) brings together the best practice in the field together and we hope will be a widely used resource.

## 10.6 Racial justice, asylum and refugees

**10.6.1** The Council continues to support the work of the Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group. Although this year the post of Racial Justice Officer of Action of Churches Together in Scotland has ceased due to funding decisions, the commitment and enthusiasm of Scotland's churches to the cause of racial justice remains strong. Important highlights of this area of work over the last year include:

- Joint statement from Scottish Church leaders on the anniversary of the birth of Dr David Livingstone, highlighting his witness and work to tackle slavery, expressing concern at modern day slavery and human trafficking, and urging all the people of Scotland to make our nation a place of safety, welcome and hospitality for all.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.placeforhope.org.uk/assets/documents/Responding\\_to\\_Sectarianism\\_-\\_Place\\_for\\_Hope\\_Report\\_June\\_2013\\_%281%29.pdf](http://www.placeforhope.org.uk/assets/documents/Responding_to_Sectarianism_-_Place_for_Hope_Report_June_2013_%281%29.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> <http://acts-scotland.org/images/stories/stephen/livingstonstatement.pdf>

- Asylum seekers in destitution have been a particular focus over the last year. A small group representing the Action of Churches Together in Scotland Church and Society Network was established to look at asylum and destitution. Their work has included:
  - Connecting with academics and charitable groups working to support asylum seekers and refugees, including a report by Glasgow Caledonian University's Poverty Information Unit, *Trapped: Destitution and Asylum in Scotland*.<sup>38</sup>
  - Supporting and publicising the *Stop Destitution* campaign organised by the Refugee Survival Trust and Scottish Refugee Council. [www.stopdestitution.org.uk](http://www.stopdestitution.org.uk)
  - Research into asylum seekers and refugees ability to access Higher Education courses at Scottish Universities. <http://www.acts-scotland.co.uk/images/stories/tom/univasylumreport0813.pdf>
  - Publication of a discussion leaflet aimed at local congregations (available from the Church and Society department at 121 George Street).

**10.6.2** 2013 saw two widely-criticised attempts by the Home Office to encourage voluntary returns by refused asylum seekers. In London the 'Go Home' vans created a huge deal of publicity and debate about the use of racist slogans and a general approach which dehumanises individuals, creates a sense of righteous difference between 'them' and 'us'. At the Home Office centre in Brand Street, Glasgow, posters and stickers in a waiting area for asylum seekers using similar motifs and messages were also denounced by a wide number of media, civic and political figures. We remain committed to the vision set out by the Church Leaders in their Livingstone statement: that we should make our nation a place of safety, welcome and hospitality for all.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/5050/Trapped\\_destitution\\_and\\_asylum\\_final.pdf](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/5050/Trapped_destitution_and_asylum_final.pdf)

## 10.7 Human trafficking

**10.7.1** The Church and Society Council is represented on the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group which submitted a substantial report and action plan on human trafficking and modern day slavery to the General Assembly in 2012.<sup>39</sup> The Group has been implementing the action plan through a range of activities. These have included exchanging information with other organisations which campaign against human trafficking, such as Anti-Slavery International, and with services that provide support to victims, for example Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA).

**10.7.2** The Group also participates in the Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking at Holyrood and has responded to several consultations on legislation relevant to human trafficking in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

**10.7.3** The Group has been particularly active in raising awareness of the issue by preparing information leaflets and in updating and developing study and resources materials. A number of workshops and presentations on the subject have been delivered.

## 10.8 Corporal punishment and children's rights

**10.8** During the course of the year the Church and Society Council has briefly considered the issue of corporal punishment of children and how this relates to recent international developments related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Church does not have a recent developed position and the Council proposes exploring the issue in more depth and reporting to a future Assembly.

## 11. The Church and 21st century health care

**11.1** The General Assembly of 2013 agreed the following Deliverance: 'Acknowledge the difficulties and constraints resulting from data protection legislation that may be faced by ministers in providing spiritual support

to hospital patients from within their parishes and by hospital chaplains, instruct the Council to explore how spiritual care can best be offered to patients within the framework of existing data protection requirements, and report to the General Assembly of 2014.'

**11.2** In forming a response to this Deliverance, the Church and Society Council agreed that the most productive approach would be to explore what could be done within present legislative framework rather than seeking an amendment to the law on data protection. It reached this conclusion following advice that the likelihood of achieving amendments to the law was minimal, not necessarily wholly desirable, and having recognised that alternative approaches to hospital chaplaincy are developing within NHS Scotland.

## 11.3 Background

**11.3.1** Significant changes are occurring at the beginning of the 21st century which underpin the understanding of how health and social care may be effectively delivered. These changes are the result of rapid demographic change, wide health inequalities, and increasing numbers of people living with multiple long term chronic conditions at a time of financial austerity. Healthcare in the industrialised world as it is currently provided is not sustainable. The following are examples of the significant patterns of conceptual change which are influencing the manner in which health and social care services will increasingly be delivered:

### 11.3.2 Perception and policy changes which influence future health and social care delivery

Current focus in health care	Moving towards
Fixing ill-health	Promotion of wellbeing
Deficit based approach	Assets-based approach
Professional expertise	Co-production of wellbeing

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/9583/Anti-Trafficking\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/9583/Anti-Trafficking_Report_2012.pdf)

Dependency on professionals	Empowering self-management
Individual	Relational/communal cohesion
Patient or pathology-centred care	Person-centred care
Patient experience	Staff together leading enhanced patient experience
Acute, institutional care	Primary and community care

**11.3.3** In Scotland, as in other Western countries, such trends are being translated into policy,<sup>40</sup> strategic planning<sup>41</sup> and gradually into practice. 21st century health care is seeking to move away from doing things to patients (or rather parts of people, when they are ill in institutional settings) to seeking to empower people to take responsibility for living well and as fully as they can in relationship with each other in community settings. Such an 'assets-based'<sup>42</sup> approach to spiritual care resonates with recent revisions in pastoral theology in the past twenty years.

**11.3.4** For the majority of the latter half of the 20th century, the predominant model of pastoral care has been perceived as care offered to those in distress or deficit on a one-to-one basis.<sup>43</sup> British healthcare chaplains have

historically focused primarily in their practice on one-to-one interventions with patients in acute existential crisis in institutional settings.<sup>44</sup> The focus has been on helping people who are in deficit to (re)discover resources within them, around them and beyond them to live with and through transition and loss. However, pastoral theologians such as Bonnie Miller-McLemore<sup>45</sup> have sought to broaden the scope of this understanding of pastoral care provision beyond being one-to-one care of the 'troubled'.<sup>46</sup> Instead, Miller-McLemore suggests promoting engagement with 'living human webs'.<sup>47</sup> Such pastoral practice involves understanding individual or communal wellbeing and is influenced by personal, internal, cultural and political dimensions.<sup>48</sup> This means that any pastoral care delivered requires not only listening to the lived experience of people but in addition recognises that to promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities over the long term requires engagement with social structures and the cultural and political contexts within which they live and work. A pastoral theology for a post-modern Scotland needs to be influenced by the life of Christ, whose sphere of engagement and influence reached out to individuals *in extremis*. He also intentionally formed and empowered the disciples, sent out the seventy two and challenged the political systems of his day to enable the Kingdom of God to break through. To promote wholeness and wellbeing requires not only a political and personal

<sup>40</sup> eg the Scottish Government's 2020 Vision, its Quality Strategy and the Integration of Health and Social Care

<sup>41</sup> eg Shifting the Balance of Care from secondary care into primary and community care contexts

<sup>42</sup> Helping people to better use the resources within them, the relationships around them and that which transcends them

<sup>43</sup> Clebschi W and Jaekle C (1964) Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective New York: Harper Torchbooks. Where they describe pastoral care as: The ministry of the cure of souls, or pastoral care, consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons, whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns.

<sup>44</sup> Boisen A (1971) Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience [1936]. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

<sup>45</sup> <http://divinity.vanderbilt.edu/people/bio/bonnie-miller-mclemore>

<sup>46</sup> Boisen 1971 and Gerkin 1984 *ie* viewing the sacred stories of individual persons as living texts. In Gerkin C (1984) The Living Human Document; Re-visioning Pastoral Counselling in Hermeneutic Mode Nashville, TN: Abingdon

<sup>47</sup> Miller-McLemore B 1996 The Living Human Web: Pastoral Theology at the Turn of the Century. In Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care, edited by J. Stevenson-Moessner, 9-26. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

<sup>48</sup> McLure B (2012) Pastoral Care. In The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology, edited by B Miller-McLemore, 269-278. Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell

dimension but also identification and use of assets (strengths) and resources of individuals and communities.

#### 11.4 Current activity

**11.4.1** Increasingly the Scottish Government is encouraging health boards not only to work collaboratively and innovatively with those in social care but with the voluntary sector, including faith communities, to create and sustain communities where meaning and purpose and social cohesion and coherence may be found as part of daily living. Our faith communities in Scotland are a tremendous asset in spiritual, social, emotional and physical terms for individuals and local communities across Scotland. Indeed, the Church of Scotland already utilises an asset-based approach to promoting wellbeing and building the Kingdom of God in many of its parishes and collaborative programmes,<sup>49</sup> or in healthcare terms helping individuals and local communities to utilise the resources of people, buildings, finance and local amenities to make the most of life and develop resilience in adversity.

**11.4.2** Healthcare chaplains in Scotland are beginning to work with an intention to promote wellbeing in individual lives and communal contexts in collaboration with a variety of disciplines and organisations across health and social care and voluntary sectors as well as supporting those *in extremis* in institutional care. At the heart of the spiritual care chaplains seek to deliver is to promote meaning and purpose in individual and shared living. Significantly the Church of Scotland is a key partner in many of these initiatives. For example:

1. In NHS Fife and NHS Ayrshire and Arran volunteers from local churches are being recruited, trained and supervised by healthcare chaplains to befriend and support frail, isolated older people on discharge from hospital.
2. Nationally, funded by the Scottish Government, NHS Education for Scotland are seeking to develop a *Spiritual Care Community of Practice in Primary Health*

<sup>49</sup> eg Faith in Community Scotland <http://faithincommunity.scotland.org/>

*and Social Care* to:

- promote the creative and collaborative delivery of spiritual care in community settings.
  - share best practice.
  - educate those in primary health and social care and the voluntary sector in spiritual care.
3. The development of Community Chaplaincy Listening (CCL) Services in GP surgeries – funded by Scottish Government. Research based on practice has shown that this service helps patients to gain confidence and promotes self-management of their health and well-being as well as normalising feelings around transition and loss. A national volunteer training scheme is being developed to enable the sustainability of this service across Scotland. In 2015 a number of volunteers will be sought to work with chaplains and already a number of retired members of churches with natural ability and experience in listening have shown an interest in this work. Volunteers will be recruited, trained and supervised by chaplains as well as working with them in a variety of health and social care settings.

**11.4.3** There are real opportunities for reciprocal learning between statutory health and social care services and faith communities, nationally and locally. Innovative assets-based work which seeks to promote wellbeing (through local people and faith community representatives working together) to maximise the strengths, positive relationships and talents of those involved has much to teach health and social care services. Statutory services have opportunities to learn from such projects and programmes of work, not just in terms of what creative activities are taking place but how those involved relate and the values-based processes which inform how services are developed. Faith in Community Scotland has published a very helpful document in this regard<sup>50</sup> which offers guidance on the promotion of such collaborative approaches. For example, those

<sup>50</sup> *Faith Endeavours: How public agencies and faith communities can work better together*

employed by statutory services and church members or representatives work together to develop a project or programme of work informed by reflection on their experience of such engagement. Examples of local assets-based work promoting individual and collective wellbeing initiated by churches and involving collaboration with local health and care statutory agencies include:

1. The Ruchazie Community Café: in an area of high unemployment, where mental illness and street violence is prevalent Ruchazie Parish Church has developed its Open Space initiative which it describes as: "...a centre for wholeness, wellbeing and spirituality. We are creating a people-friendly environment to meet the needs of our community and offer openings into new ways of thinking and being that are caring, supportive and challenging."
2. The Ripple Project, set up by St Margaret's Restalrig, Edinburgh, offers a wide range of projects in support of health and wellbeing: the Listening Place providing one-to-one therapeutic and non-judgemental listening, older people's lunch club and social clubs with door to door transport, walking and gentle exercise groups, knitting network, creative writing groups, parent/carer toddler groups, a welcoming, low cost community café and a variety of volunteering opportunities. In addition, they host a range of specialised services appropriate to the needs of a disadvantaged community including smoking cessation and community food initiatives, benefits advice, rent arrears support, employment services and computer training. The approach is designed to tackle many of the issues that lead to illness or trauma at a preventative stage as well as to support those in recovery. The projects address both practical, nutritional and health needs. They contribute to developing social capital through promoting human interaction, a sense of self-worth and community belonging. All of which is based on developing friendships, relationships of care and generally providing often initially isolated individuals with 'places to go and people to see'. Often people's involvement begins with a tiny step and expands eg

a Listening Place client may try out volunteering or join a group or alternatively through first entering the building to use the café, people may find out about other activities or support services that will help them.

#### 11.4 The way forward

**11.4.1** Gradually, spiritual care – in terms of helping individuals and communities (re)discover meaning and purpose in their lives – is becoming more integrated into the health and wellbeing agenda in our country. It is increasingly seen as a core aspect of promoting social cohesion and resilience in the life of our nation. Sir Harry Burns, the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland suggests rather than focussing on tackling ill-health, our society would be better off seeking to create health and promote wellbeing.<sup>51</sup> He argues that for the creation of health our local communities need to be places where life shared is comprehensible, manageable and meaningful otherwise individuals experience chronic stress.<sup>52</sup> In simple terms this means people need a reason to get out of bed in the morning, a purpose in life and a feeling of contributing and belonging as well as stable relationships which are affirming and encouraging. The Church of Scotland has been at the heart of promoting these factors that enhance wellbeing in local communities Scotland since the Reformation. However, in broad terms health and social care statutory services have not always realised what an asset faith communities are (other than in purely religious terms) in relation to promoting health and wholeness, and faith communities have found relating to statutory services challenging.<sup>53</sup>

**11.4.2** There are real opportunities at present in the current political and policy climate to promote meaningful connections and relationships between health and social care and faith communities at local and national levels. For example, the Joint Improvement Team of the Scottish

<sup>51</sup> Burns H (2012) *The Tenth Kilbrandon Lecture* Edinburgh: Scottish Government <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00403544.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/therapies/spiritualityandmentalhealth.aspx>

Government has set up a group to look at the contribution of faith communities to care of older people. Several members of the Church of Scotland are part of this group either in their health and social care roles or as part of collaborative projects already engaged in promoting wellbeing.

**11.4.3** The development of spiritual care in health and social care over the next ten years in Scotland will be based on a vision of promoting wellbeing through an assets-based approach, increasingly in community settings *ie* working with people not as patients but as persons living in community. The Spiritual Care Strategic Development Group who are charged by NHS Scotland in taking this work forward understand that this requires collaboration, innovation, open engagement and sharing across professional disciplines and health and social care and third sectors. Healthcare chaplains and the Church of Scotland have a significant part to play in making such a vision a reality.

**11.4.4** Data protection issues can be perceived to be a barrier to the provision of pastoral care by parish ministers and others because clergy may be currently unaware of those from their parish who are in hospital and are prevented from finding out via hospital records. The assets-based approach moves away from a barrier being created. Furthermore, because this model is predicated on hospital chaplains encouraging an assets-based approach in the local communities which their hospital serves, they are much more likely to be able and free to let parishes know of someone returning to the community where their care needs to continue, especially when they are assisting in assuring that a given individual has the community based support they require. This approach should mean that parishes will be better informed about the needs of those requiring support for their health, and therefore will be able to respond in ways that have a greater impact on the lives of more people in need.

**11.4.5** The model outlined in the report means that the giving and receiving of information between chaplains and congregations about those entering or leaving

hospital can happen openly and transparently. This will mean more people will receive the help and support they need through the work of the Church without requiring an attempt to change data protection legislation, which is likely to be unsuccessful.

## 12. Living a theology which counters violence against women

The following report *Living a theology which counters violence against women* is a summary. The full report is available from the Church of Scotland General Assembly web pages – [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk) – and can be obtained in electronic format or paper copies, free of charge, by contacting the Church and Society offices on 0131 240 2275 or by e-mail from – [churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:churchandsociety@cofscotland.org.uk)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.  
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.  
(John 10:10)

### 12.1 Introduction

**12.1.1** God's desire is for all people to enjoy fullness of life. With that as a starting point, the discussions in this report are informed by the wisdom and experience of many people, past and present, in particular by the insights of women affected by violence, and by studies which have emerged from the engaged concern for gender justice. They raise important questions and reflect a developing and global theological enterprise which requires to be taken seriously and with a measure of urgency. We do not claim to have definitive or comprehensive 'answers'. Rather, this is stimulation and encouragement to continue the great tradition of contextual theological engagement.

**12.1.2** The report seeks to inform and to encourage the Church in living a theology which counters violence against women (VAW).<sup>54</sup> It locates the doing of theology as

<sup>54</sup> The 2012 General Assembly instructed a group under the oversight of the Church and Society Council to prepare this report, as part of a Church-wide Action Plan to tackle violence against women



'the people's work'. David Ford writes: 'Christian wisdom is discerned within the earshot of the cries of God's people, and is above all alert to the cries of Jesus; doing justice to diverse cries is at the heart of this theological wisdom.'<sup>55</sup> The cries of women affected by violence, including, but not exclusively, within our own church, are our touchstone. We call on the Church to find safe ways to highlight their stories and promote appropriate responses.

**12.1.3** Informed by survivors and theologians from across the world, this report bears testimony to struggles with doctrines and scriptures which have sometimes been interpreted in ways which seem to collude with violence and deny fullness of life. It also acknowledges and points to some of the liberating and life-affirming resources of scripture and tradition which offer healing and hope. It can be profoundly disturbing to look at cherished beliefs and texts through the eyes of violated women, but unless we confront the ways (deliberate or unwitting) that theology has been misused to constrain, to silence, to oppress and to deny abundant life, the church's offer of sanctuary and salvation will be compromised. The report's intention is not to dismiss or condemn, but to invite an open and respectful engagement with theological reflection emerging in the midst of survivors' tears and cries, faith and hopes.

**12.1.4** A few years ago, a group of women spent a weekend together in a beautiful corner of Perthshire. They were all striving in different ways to survive the traumatic legacy of men's violence and abuse, seared deeply into their bodies and lives. Each one had a unique story struggling to be told – narratives of violation and exploitation; in childhood homes, in school or university, homeless and on the streets, at work and at church. Stories of being hurt and harmed, shamed and silenced, raped and demonised, by fathers and friends, husbands and classmates, men they knew and men they didn't know.

<sup>55</sup> Adapted from David Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*, p. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

**12.1.5** This group of women who met together were all women of faith, but their faith communities had not always equipped or supported them to overcome the destructive power of violence. Yet Jesus came to bring good news to all God's people. We believe in that gospel, and so our church is called to live a theology which counters violence against women.

## 12.2 What is violence against women?

"Violence against women is not the result of random, individual acts of misconduct, but rather is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men...Violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, from before birth to old age. It cuts across both the public and the private spheres."

Ending Violence Against Women: from Words to Action,  
UN Secretary General's Report 2006

**12.2.1** Violence against women goes far deeper and wider than domestic abuse. It is the everyday context in which female human beings all over the world are born, grow up, and have to learn what it means to be a 'woman'. Devastating impacts include physical, emotional, psychological, economic, social and spiritual harm. Millions of women and girls are affected by men's violation and abuse, regardless of class, ethnicity, religion and circumstances. In all its forms, violence against women has the consequence of limiting 'space for action' and sustaining gender inequality.

**12.2.2** The Scottish Government, supported by key service providers and public agencies, promotes a strategic approach to address this major social concern. We commend the Government's leadership. Its definition of violence against women (2009) is rooted in global agreement as enshrined in the UN Declaration to End all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1993).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Scottish Government (2009) Safer Lives, Changed Lives, s4.1 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/06/02153519/0>

### 12.3 Violence against women – a gender analysis

**12.3.1** We have adopted a gender analysis because research shows that women and men use and experience violence differently.<sup>57</sup> Gender refers to the meanings and practices society attaches to being male and female. It is a basic organising principle, structuring relationships, institutions, cultures, and the distribution of resources. Despite enormous social and cultural changes, gender inequality remains profound and durable, even in countries like Scotland.

**12.3.2** This explanation from the Scottish Government neatly explains what gender has to do with violence against women:

“Men are statistically much more likely to use violence (especially severe violence) against other men and against women. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence committed mainly by men towards women and children. If something overwhelmingly affects one section of the population, we need to ask why and we need to do something about it.”<sup>58</sup>

### 12.4 Why focus on violence against women and not men?

**12.4.1** Violence is clearly a major social problem, not only for women, but for boys, men and wider society, urgently requiring to be examined and addressed. However, the meanings, prevalence, practice and impact for boys and men experiencing violence are significantly different to women and girls. There is a requirement to consider the context in each case. For men and boys the relationship between dominant social norms of masculinity and violence are important. These are features of our human

<sup>57</sup> The full report outlines some important concepts and theories concerning the extent, dynamics, normalisation, impacts and consequences of the continuum of violence against women, which is rooted in and perpetuates gender injustice

<sup>58</sup> “What does gender have to do with violence against women?” Scottish Government, January 2010 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/301265/0093975.pdf>

relations and culture and they require urgent and critical scrutiny, for the wellbeing of *all* human beings. Men’s experience of victimisation is shaped by those norms. All violence is not the same, and ignoring gender, which is the major risk factor, is not in the interests of anyone.<sup>59</sup>

**12.4.2** Since 1999, the Scottish Parliament and Government have had an honourable cross-party record of acknowledging that VAW is a major and complex social problem, requiring co-ordinated, well-resourced and strategic action based on recognition that it is rooted in and perpetuates gender injustice. The Scottish Government has adopted a gender analysis because research shows that women and men use and experience violence differently.

### 12.5 The challenge for the Church as an institution: the role of women and a context of gender based violation and abuse

**12.5.1** As social institutions, churches have the capacity both to legitimise and to challenge the stereotypes, traditions and expectations about men and women which sustain gender inequality.

Gender as a marker of authority has been a key point of division in debates and disagreements in the Church over the years. More than forty years since legislation opened the offices of the Church to women and men on equal terms, this remains a live issue for some.

“There are parts of the country where women are still denied a place on Kirk Sessions; elders who having moved from one part of the country to another find their ordination is called into question. We talk of the great advances made since women were ordained in

<sup>59</sup> The Violence Reduction Unit coordinates effective anti-violence initiatives across Scotland: <http://www.actiononviolence.co.uk/>. Michael Kaufman, Canadian founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, has written extensively on men, masculinities and violence, <http://www.michaelkaufman.com/articles/>. The Scottish White Ribbon Campaign encourages men to be active in resisting violence against women. Robert Jensen and Jackson Katz are useful sources of research, information and action: <http://www.jacksonkatz.com/>;

1966, but in some areas that is still a huge issue. They continue to serve as best they can and in the areas where they can make a difference but the pain is real and the hurt runs deep. In such areas if it were not for the Guild, they would be quite isolated.”

Right Rev Lorna Hood, speaking at the Guild Annual Conference, September 2013

**12.5.2** The entry of women into ministry is not always the indicator of change that it might appear to be. There is a co-existence in today’s Church of Scotland, of women who seem to have broken through the ‘stained glass ceiling’ and are providing significant leadership in a range of roles across church life, alongside evidence of continuing resistance to equality and inclusive language, segregation of roles and attitudes which lead to discrimination, trivialisation or exclusion on grounds of gender.<sup>60</sup> These deeply rooted structural relationships of inequality are just one manifestation of the struggles that women continue to encounter within society and within the church.

**12.5.3** Anne Logan’s research, based on a quantitative survey and interviews with 31 women in Church of Scotland ministry, includes a consideration of relationships with male colleagues. While there is evidence of many positive experiences, these are “far outweighed by the negative ones”. Logan’s interviewees tell of hostility, harassment, patronising attitudes, double standards, isolation and gender-based bullying.<sup>61</sup>

**12.5.4** Whilst vital and important work has been done to address the safeguarding of children, young people and

[http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/articles\\_gender.html](http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/articles_gender.html) Information and help available to men as offenders and as victims of domestic abuse: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women/CaledonianSystem>; <http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/mens-advice-line.html>; <http://www.abusedmeninscotland.org/>

<sup>60</sup> M Chaves (1997) *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organisations*

<sup>61</sup> Anne T Logan (2010) *Ordained Ministry of Women in the Church of Scotland: The first forty years* PhD thesis, University of Glasgow

vulnerable adults within a church context,<sup>62</sup> churches have been slower to acknowledge or address the exploitation and abuse of *adults* (mostly women) by clergy and others with pastoral or supervisory responsibility (mostly men). Research in different locations, including the United Kingdom, attests that such exploitation is common though it is usually hidden, trivialized, misnamed and rarely sanctioned<sup>63</sup> and at levels comparable to the rest of society.<sup>64</sup>

## **12.6 Violence against women – a profound theological challenge**

*Please note that full discussion of the points raised in this section are available in the main report (available online or from the Church and Society office).*

**12.6.1** Doing theology is a continuing critical conversation involving story and text, situation and tradition, out of which we seek to discern God’s living, liberating Word, embodied and enacted by the Christian community. The structure of the report follows the ‘pastoral cycle’ of experience, analysis, theological reflection and planning for action.<sup>65</sup> We believe that resources of our Christian faith offer rich potential for healing and justice in the face of violence. However, wherever the Church does not counter such violence with an informed and passionate spirit, we are not being faithful to our gospel calling.

**12.6.2** This is not an abstract exercise of intellect or piety. The reformers wrestled with faith and theology as

<sup>62</sup> The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service is to be commended on its excellent work in this context

<sup>63</sup> L Orr (2000) *Out of the Shadows: Christianity and Violence Against Women in Scotland*

<sup>64</sup> L Radford and C Cappell (2002) *Domestic Violence and the Methodist Church: The Way Forward?* The Methodist Church has continued to develop research and responses to domestic abuse.

<sup>65</sup> The structure of the report follows the ‘pastoral cycle’ which has been widely used in theological education, contextual Bible study and other contexts. This link offers simple explanations, graphics and resources for further reading: <http://md.glasgow.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Pastoral-Cycle-resources.pdf>

matters of life and death inseparable from the context of people's lives, relationships and communities. Inspired and disturbed by the Holy Spirit, the Church changed and continues to change.

**12.6.3 Nothing about us without us is for us: hearing the cries of survivors** – The Poverty Truth Commission recognised the expertise and wisdom of people living in poverty, challenged the wealthy and powerful to involve and listen to them, and modelled a process for working together to bring about justice.<sup>66</sup> We must likewise encourage approaches to theological reflection which create space and opportunity for women to share stories of hurt and resistance, and for faith communities to listen and learn from the expertise of those affected by the continuum of violence against women.<sup>67</sup>

**12.6.4 Interpretations of the life of Christ** – Theology has been called 'faith's language about God'.<sup>68</sup> There are many different theologies. All are fallible attempts to talk of God rooted in human experience and shaped by human language. All theological thinking (and all expression of knowledge) is situated from a particular perspective, and is gendered and contextual. In the past, theological discourse has been predominately from a male perspective, but has usually been regarded as being objective knowledge from a neutral, universal point of view. That is changing, but very slowly. One theologian expressed it thus:

"The life of Jesus Christ is at odds with the sexist theology of complementarity, the racist theology of white superiority, the clerical theology of cultic privilege, the political theology of exploitation and economic injustice, and the patriarchal theology of male dominance and control."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> The Poverty Truth Commission – a project of Faith in Community Scotland and supported by the Church of Scotland, <http://www.povertytruthcommission.org/>

<sup>67</sup> Examples of good practice in Scotland and around the world are found in section four of the main report.

<sup>68</sup> For example, by Peter C. Hodgson, *Constructive Christian Theology: A Revisioning* published in *Studia Theologica* 47 (1993), p. 4

<sup>69</sup> Catherine.M. LaCugna (1993) *God in Communion with Us in*

**12.6.5 Theologies can be either stepping stones or stumbling blocks.**<sup>70</sup> The gospel stories about Jesus were shaped and recorded in the context of an Ancient Near East patriarchal society under Imperial occupation. They reflect the androcentric character of the times: the disciples who are mostly depicted as a group of named men. But gospel accounts also convey a strong sense of these disciples failing fully to grasp the radical nature and implications of Jesus' mission. Women do feature in the gospel – some who were among the group of disciples, and others whom Jesus encounters along the way. Martha, the woman at the well, the woman who anoints Jesus at Bethany; they are presented in contrast with the men, as ones who truly discern and confess Jesus as God's chosen one, and who are called by him to proclamation and leadership.<sup>71</sup>

**12.6.6 Theology of the Cross** – One area of theological thinking that has come under particular scrutiny in this context has been theology of the cross and doctrines of atonement. What is the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth? There have been conscientious and faithful attempts throughout Christian history to answer this question with various atonement theologies.<sup>72</sup> For some these have appeared to validate violence. They have recently been strongly challenged by those developing contextual theologies written from the perspective of women (from different locations) and black communities.<sup>73</sup> Critiques have been formulated by those

*Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective.*

ed. Catherine M LaCugna, New York: Harper Collins, pp 83-114, p99

<sup>70</sup> For a comprehensive review of methods of theological reflection see Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frankie Ward (eds) *Theological Reflection Methods*, London: SCM Press 2005

<sup>71</sup> Martin Scott (1992) *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*; The Library of New Testament Studies

<sup>72</sup> for example, those theologies labelled as 'satisfaction atonement' (Anselm), 'moral theory' (Abelard) and *Christus Victor* as outlined by Gustav Aulén (1969)

<sup>73</sup> For an example of black theology see James H Cone *God of the Oppressed* (1997 – rev.ed.) Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books. Feminist perspectives challenging 'classical' atonement theologies are found in Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker 'God So Loved the World' in *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological*

who have experienced marginalisation and oppression because of gender, or race. They have depicted “classical atonement doctrines as ... models of Jesus’ work that encourage women to submit passively to abuse.”<sup>74</sup>

**12.6.7** Such critics have challenged any understanding of atonement that: ‘presumes salvation or reconciliation to God that would understand the death of Jesus as an act required in order to satisfy divine justice. The sharpest challenges would eliminate ideas of atonement and redemptive suffering entirely from Christian theology.’ Instead they argue that all theologies of atonement from the earliest to the contemporary, are contextual.<sup>75</sup>

**12.6.8** Mishandling the presentation of atonement theologies as part of the response to violence against women in the Church could cause deep harm. Finding salvation and meaning in the cross while advocating for justice and human flourishing are necessary parts of the Church’s common witness. “When we strive to move away from abusive relationships, away from passivity, away from apathy and away from the absence of feeling, that is precisely when we embody redemption.”<sup>76</sup> Women who have experienced violence and the everyday violations which diminish their safety and selfhood need to hear that their salvation does not require them to put up with harmful and destructive suffering at the hands of others.

**12.6.9 Women created in the image of God** – The first creation account in Genesis (Gen 1:27) holds the understanding that human beings are created equally in

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*Sourcebook.* eds. Carol J Adams and Marie M. Fortune, pp36-59 New York: Continuum, 1998 and in Rita Nakashima Brock *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power.* New York: Crossroad, 1988. For an example of a womanist perspective see Delores Williams *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk.* Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 1993

<sup>74</sup> J Denny Weaver (2001) *The Non-Violent Atonement.* Grand Rapids Michigan and Cambridge UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. p5

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> ‘Redemption’ by Lucy Tatman in: An A to Z of Feminist Theology, ed by Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan: Sheffield Academic Press: 1996, p.199

the image of God. However “women have been viewed by much of the Christian tradition ...as lesser bearers of the image [of God]”.<sup>77</sup> This has been seen in the denigration and subordination of women and past exclusion of women from positions of authority both within and outwith the church. Overcoming this completely will require the “generation of counter images that confirm and celebrate the goodness of woman as finite creation.”<sup>78</sup> It needs to be clear that women are equally part of God’s good creation, in what the church professes and practices.

**12.6.10 The Word of God and the Bible** – The Bible is the collection of texts to which we look as a foundational source for discerning what it means to be Christian and to be faithful to God’s purpose for us. There is a major difficulty in relation to countering violence against women when relying primarily on the Bible as the source for inspiration or direction. Within the pages of the Bible we find myriad stories and writings which appear to absorb or endorse violence against women as if it is justified or unremarkable.

**12.6.11** The Bible can be read and applied differently according to the context and status of particular readers or groups of readers. Those in positions of authority in the Churches for example, will often identify texts to support their own positions. In contrast, those without power may struggle to identify appropriate texts that address their situations, or even if they do, may struggle to interpret these texts in ways that offer liberation. The prevalence of violence against women within the Churches as well as in wider society, demands that we pay ever greater attention to allowing, enabling and encouraging subversive readings of the biblical texts in order to challenge the kinds of normative presumptions outlined in this summary, at every possible point. This will undoubtedly have consequences that cannot be

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<sup>77</sup> Mary McIntock Fulkerson ‘The *Imago Dei* and a Reformed Logic for Feminist/Womanist Critique’, in Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serena Jones, eds *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics,* Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press 2006, p. 96

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* pp.100-101



anticipated, but that have the potential to be seriously disruptive and potentially liberating in relation to established presumptions, practices, structures and hierarchies.

**12.6.12** Our scriptures are not neutral, and the cultural norms which spanned hundreds of years across various territorial boundaries have directly influenced both what is written and how they have been read. To do justice to the Bible the depth and breadth of how these scriptures have been put together need to be understood and acknowledged. The Bible apparently contradicts itself; has sections which are missing and subsequently made up; and includes stories which tell us of atrocities committed in the name of God. The wisdom required to connect this fascinating collection of scriptures to modern day living cannot be confined by literal interpretation.

**12.6.13** It is not necessary to read the Bible to conclude that violence against women is wrong. But when people are encouraged and enabled to read the Bible in dialogue with their own context, their own experiences, and with an open and questioning spirit, God's liberating word still speaks with power and vitality.

## 12.7 Sanctuary and light

**12.7.1** At the beginning of this report, we met a group of women who had gathered in Perthshire. One of the women, a middle aged teacher and member of her local Church of Scotland Guild, told the group that living with her violent husband (a lawyer and elder) had been like incarceration in a living tomb of fear and isolation. Having been subjected to intimate terrorism, she said:

"I was so constricted, so fearful. I just lost myself really ... I wanted to try harder and harder all the time to be good, to be a proper wife, to please him, to stop him hurting and humiliating me. And the more I tried, the worse it got. There was no "I" left in the end – just a shadow fading into walls."

**12.7.2** However, this story has not ended in desolation and silence. With the support of family, friends and

Women's Aid, she has claimed her right to live in freedom, dignity and honesty. Being a survivor has not been easy, but she has claimed her space and right to life. In her congregation she is helping to create a life-affirming community for survivors and their friends: a sanctuary of courage, of safety and refuge, where stories may be spoken and shared without fear; where there is a welcome for all; where difference is celebrated and pain confronted honestly. A sanctuary which nourishes bodies and spirits, which fosters connections and companionship, attentive to the promise and possibility of transforming justice; where touch is healing not harmful, and where grace in love is revealed.

**12.7.3** The World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches have named violence against women as sin and encourage members, in partnership with others, to address causes and consequences.<sup>79</sup> That requires of us the honesty to face up to the ways that church structures, power relations, expectations, theology and practices have been implicated in the normalising of gender injustice. The WCRC has produced *Created in God's Image*<sup>80</sup> – a valuable resource for study, worship and action on gender justice – and we commend it to the Church.

**12.7.4** There is more to be done in our churches to make it crystal clear that women are equally made in the image of God, through care taken in the language used for worship, through sensitive preaching, and use of the Bible. All of these must affirm rather than denigrate and de-value women, body, mind and spirit. Violence against

<sup>79</sup> As declared at the WCC Harare Assembly (1998) and subsequently. All ecumenical bodies and confessional organisations have undertaken work to name and address violence against women <http://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/violence-against-women-is-sin-reformed-church-body-leader-says-1800>; [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2009/11\\_09/11\\_30\\_09/113009\\_church.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2009/11_09/11_30_09/113009_church.htm); <http://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/church-body-speaks-out-on-violence-against-women-at-un-22000>

<sup>80</sup> [http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Positive\\_MasculinitiesGenderManual\\_0.pdf](http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Positive_MasculinitiesGenderManual_0.pdf)



women is contrary to the will of God. We believe in life abundant for all God's people, and this is our prayer for the church and for the world.

### 13. Violence Against Women Advisory Group

**13.1** In 2012 the General Assembly instructed all the Councils and Committees of the Church to implement an Action Plan in support of the movement to eradicate violence against women. One of the points in the action plan was the setting up of an Advisory Group to assist the Church in making real change and achieving goals.

**13.2** In 2013/14 the Violence Against Women Advisory Group has had a rather start/stop year. A change in Convener coupled with some confusion over its role suggested a need to re-evaluate how the group can best operate.

**13.3** Nevertheless, progress has been made. Some Councils and Committees of the Church have informed the Council of Assembly of their three goals in relation to addressing the issue of violence against women, as requested in the Action Plan. However the Advisory Group has played only a limited role in the forming of these goals and, on reviewing the goals, feels it could have contributed more to the discussion in order to make the goals stronger and more specific. Part of the confusion was that it was not widely recognised that the Advisory Group was available to assist in the process of creating their goals or their implementation.

**13.4** Following discussion with the Secretary to the Council of Assembly, the Convener of the Advisory Group was invited to the December 2013 meeting of the Council of Assembly to clarify the Group's remit and to suggest ways in which it can work in partnership with the Councils/Committees as they formulate and implement their goals and to encourage those Councils/Committees who have not yet brought forward goals to do so. It is hoped the Advisory Group will then be able to play a more active and meaningful role in the process.

## 14. Politics and Government

### 14.1 Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office

**14.1.1** The Church of Scotland collaborates in the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO), an ecumenical project which serves 11 Scottish denominations. The two staff members of the SCPO are part of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society department, and are based in Hanover Street in central Edinburgh. The SCPO acts as a bridge, connecting church life and views to politicians and government in Holyrood and Westminster, and helping to explain political processes and important legislative issues to church communities. In the 18 months leading up to the referendum on Scottish independence the SCPO has co-ordinated *Imagining Scotland's Future*, a series of community consultation events, hosted in churches, to enable impartial discussion about the future of Scotland. A report of these events is included below (section 15). This focus on the referendum debate has replaced some of the normal work of the SCPO during this important period of constitutional reflection.

**14.1.2** In 2013 the SCPO has continued to enable ecumenical discussion and shared policy-making by hosting topic-specific roundtable conversations. These events, which have usually focused on a particular government consultation or legislative proposal, have been open to participation from the 11 denominations that the SCPO works with, for the exchange of views and ideas. Roundtable events have been held to discuss the regulation of sexual entertainment venues, human trafficking and assisted suicide. Roundtables have informed ecumenical or denominational responses to government or parliamentary consultations.

### 14.2 Parliamentary visits

**14.2.1** Rt Rev Lorna Hood visited the Scottish Parliament in February, where she met a range of MSPs and party leaders as well as leading the Parliament's Time for Reflection. The launch of the report on *Imagining Scotland's Future: community consultations* took place during the visit. A regular visit by representatives of the Church and Society Council to London to engage with

Scottish MPs, Peers and with the UK Government has been an important demonstration of commitment to strengthening relationships. At the time of writing, a visit is planned for the spring of 2014.

### 14.3 Parliamentary liaison and communication

**14.3.1** The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office continues to liaise with MSPs, MPs and their research staff, both in reaction to political events, and proactively sharing the work of the Church with elected representatives and officials. The opportunity to share the work of the Church with parliamentarians is an important function of the SCPO, and staff members have been involved with securing MSPs' support for parliamentary motions commending aspects of the Church's work, at home and abroad. The Church has spoken out on a range of issues, including meeting with MPs and MSPs to discuss human trafficking, the impact of welfare reform and the role of faith in Scottish society. In addition, letters to politicians ahead of particular parliamentary debates have included:

- A cap on the uprating of benefits
- The criminalisation of the purchase of sex
- High cost credit
- The Transparency in Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill

**14.3.2** Whilst there is a place for national-led political engagement, there is also an important role for individuals or congregations to keep in touch with local representatives. MPs and MSPs are there to serve their local communities and so it is important that churches tell their representatives what is going on, and challenge them when there is a need to speak out. Good communication is a vital aspect of influencing political decision-makers, and the staff members of the SCPO are always available to give advice to people who are keen to engage with politicians on topical issues. The SCPO offer workshops on "how to lobby your MSP", and have recently updated materials which are available from the office ([info@actsparl.org](mailto:info@actsparl.org) telephone 0131 220 0305).

### 14.4 Index of consultation responses

**14.4.1** Below is a list of all the responses made by the Church of Scotland to Government consultations and Parliamentary inquiries in the year from January to December 2012. Copies of the responses are available online at [www.actsparl.org](http://www.actsparl.org) under 'Official Responses'. (All responses were from the Church and Society Council, except where noted.)

#### 14.4.2 Scottish Government Consultations:

- Land Reform Review Group (January 2013)
- Reforming the Community Justice System (April 2013, Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice)
- Regulation of Sexual Entertainment Venues (September 2013, ecumenical response)
- Development of Electronic Monitoring in Scotland: A Consultation on the Future Direction of the Electronic Monitoring Service (December 2013, Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice)

#### 14.4.3 Scottish Parliament Inquires:

- Letter to Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee on Scottish Independence Referendum Franchise (April 2013)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill (July 2013)
- Bankruptcy and Debt Advice (Scotland) Bill (August 2013)
- Petition PE01487 Religious Observance (October 2013)
- Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill: Human Trafficking aggravation (August 2013, Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group)
- Proposed Protection from Eviction (Bedroom Tax) (Scotland) Bill (December 2013)
- Proposed Human Trafficking (Scotland) Bill (December 2013, Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group)

#### 14.4.4 UK Government Consultations:

- Measuring Child Poverty: a consultation on better measures of child poverty (February 2013)

#### 14.4.5 Other Organisations:

- Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill: Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement (October 2013)

- Submission to Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy: COSLA (December 2013)

#### 14.5 Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

**14.5.1** The Legal Questions Committee has been responsible for the Church of Scotland's response to the Scottish Government's proposals for same-sex marriage. Written evidence to the Government (March 2013) and Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee (August 2013) are also available to read on the SCPO website [www.actsparl.org](http://www.actsparl.org) under 'Official Responses'.

### 15. Referendum on Scottish independence

**15.1 Impartiality** – The 2012 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed that the Church should remain impartial in regard to its position on Scottish independence. However, being impartial does not equate to passivity. That same Assembly instructed the Church and Society Council to help the Church to engage at civic, political and local level with questions related to the constitutional future of Scotland, particularly how independence might impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people.

**15.2 Imagining Scotland's Future: Community Consultations** – A full report is available on the Church of Scotland website: [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/19243/our\\_vision.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/19243/our_vision.pdf)

**15.3 The Process** – The purpose of the Imagining Scotland's Future: Community Consultations series was to create a politically neutral space in which people could explore the values and aspirations they have for the future of Scotland ahead of the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014. The series of consultations were supported by the Church and Society Council during 2013. Each event used a guided and structured discussion to explore what participants believed to be important to the future of Scotland. Each discussion looked at three questions:

1. What values are most important to you for the future of Scotland?

2. How can we make Scotland a better place to be?
3. How do we put our aspirations into action?

These questions were explored using small groups to first discover individual opinions before using discussions and conversation to find common ground and prioritise the values and ideas of the group. Throughout the process it was stressed that this was not a discussion about which way to vote in the referendum; indeed, participants were encouraged to move beyond a polarising yes / no discourse for the duration of the event. The process was inspired by collaborating with So Say Scotland, who were in turn inspired by the experiences of the Icelandic Constitutional Assembly, to host the first Thinking Together Citizens Assembly<sup>81</sup> in Glasgow in February 2013.

**15.4 Participants** – In total there were 32 events reaching communities across the country; from Moray and Aberdeen to Ayrshire and the Borders. Over 900 people took part in the process, and the Council is thankful to those who hosted us, and the facilitators who helped to run the events. People of all ages took part, and we were particularly delighted to be able to run an event at the Church of Scotland's National Youth Assembly which drew around 120 participants aged 17-25 from across Scotland. Many people who took part were associated with their local church, but not exclusively. Some events were advertised to church members and users of the church premises, others were ecumenical, and others were advertised more widely for example in local newspapers, attracting people from the community who self-identified as not having a regular church connection. Although the sample was not a balanced demographic, it is, we would suggest, not unrepresentative of the communities we visited, and certainly provides an interesting picture of Scotland at the grassroots.

**15.5 'Imagining Scotland's Future: Our Vision' Report Launch** – The report of the outcomes of the community

<sup>81</sup> Hosted by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) at their annual event, The Gathering, at Glasgow's SECC

consultations, 'Imagining Scotland's Future: Our Vision' was launched at the Scottish Storytelling Centre on Wednesday 26 February as part of the Moderator's annual visit to the Scottish Parliament.

**15.6 Resourcing local congregations to engage in the referendum debate** – The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office will have resources available for congregations who wish to run events in the lead-up to the referendum, along similar lines to hustings guidance that has been prepared in advance of parliamentary elections in previous years. This information will be available on the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office website. The Church and Society Council is happy to provide speakers to local congregations who wish a presentation on the outcomes of the Imagining Scotland's Future: Community Consultations series to stimulate discussions in their own communities. Contact the Local Involvement Officer, Fiona Buchanan ([fbuchanan@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:fbuchanan@cofscotland.org.uk)) for more information.

## 16. Education

**16.1** Last year the General Assembly instructed the Church and Society Council, through its Standing Committee on Education, to prioritise and develop its work on the following five areas:

1. Improved pupil and staff experience of Religious Observance in schools.
2. The provision of and improved access to new resources for the delivery of high quality Religious and Moral Education in Scottish schools.
3. Effective chaplaincy in schools and Further Education colleges.
4. Well informed and effective Church of Scotland Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees.
5. Consistent and effective engagement in public debate on the purpose and task of education in Scotland.

**16.2** The Church of Scotland's longstanding commitment to education and support for young people has been at the forefront of a lively debate about the place of religion

in contemporary Scotland. Secularist organisations have over the past year been active in challenging the status of the Church and have asked why people of faith should continue to have a voice in public life. The Church of Scotland needs to remain committed to the tradition of apologetics, of defending and promoting the faith in public discourse. This tradition needs to be reaffirmed in the face of calls which seek to deny a voice for people of faith from a tiny, yet vociferous, minority. The secularist groups have also, controversially, claimed that the Church is a self-serving institution which has little contribution to make to the wellbeing of common life in communities and as a nation, and on occasion have misrepresented the views and work of the Church of Scotland. The Standing Committee on Education and the Church and Society Council remain committed to dialogue with the secular groups for three reasons:

- It is a way of improving understanding of each other's position.
- The Church believes in and is committed to the promotion of a pluralist society, where everyone's views are respected and voices can be heard.
- Because searching for common ground with those whom we disagree with is more productive for all than attempting to have one view prevail over another.

## 16.3 Improved pupil and staff experience of Religious Observance in schools

**16.3.1** Earlier this year there was some press coverage of a statement by the Church and Society Council and the Humanist Society Scotland regarding the renaming of Religious Observance as Time for reflection. There was sadly, a great deal of misinformation in the coverage and commentary on that statement. The Church and Society Council, through its Standing Committee on Education, remains committed to high quality, regular Religious Observance/Time for Reflection in schools as defined by the Scottish Government in guidelines issued in 2005 and a follow-up advice note from 2011.

Both the guidelines and the letter state that: "In recognition of Scotland's Christian heritage, schools are

encouraged to use the rich resources of this tradition when planning religious observance”.

**16.3.2** The importance of using our Christian heritage is reiterated in four separate paragraphs in the 2005 guidelines and again in similar numbers in the 2011 advice note. The Council’s call for a name change to Time for Reflection was not in any way, shape or form an attempt to reduce the place of our Christian tradition as part of the content that informs and shapes Religious Observance. On the contrary, it was to ensure the embedding of that time within the school curriculum as being opt out rather than opt in, as was being called for by the Scottish Secular Society in a petition to the Scottish Parliament. In that regard, The Council was pleased to see the support of the Government for Religious Observance in Schools and the present ‘opt out’ model.

**16.3.3** The use of our Christian heritage in Religious Observance/Time for Reflection does need to be understood in the context of the further comment in both the letter and guidelines which say:

“Many school communities contain pupils and staff from faiths other than Christianity or with no faith commitment. This should be taken fully into account in supporting spiritual development. It is of central importance that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in forms of religious observance without compromise to their personal faith stances”.

**16.3.4** Thus, according to Government guidelines, Religious Observance in schools can and should draw on the wisdom and insight of Christianity but in doing so, those leading must be aware of the range of faith and beliefs in those gathered and ensure that the content of the event allows everyone to participate with integrity. This indeed is current practice in many schools. School Chaplains who follow these guidelines, as many already do, will continue to add something special and significant to pupils’ educational experience and spiritual development whatever the pupils’ faith or belief.

**16.3.5** It is in that context of ensuring that everyone can participate with integrity that the Scottish Government’s 2011 letter said:

“Scottish Government Ministers also recognise that whilst the Education (Scotland) Act uses the term religious observance, and as a consequence both Scottish Government and its partners (LTS and HMIE for example) use the same terminology, schools may feel a different name for the events that meet their religious observance requirements will be more appropriate to their context and culture. This is to be encouraged but needs careful thought and if possible some external reference point. For example, in a non-denominational school, the use of the title Time for Reflection might be appropriate because it is a clear description of the activity”.

**16.3.6** Over the last eight years, the Church and Society Council and the Standing Committee on Education have developed and delivered an extensive Religious Observance training programme and this has helped improve practice in schools. The programme has included partnership events for school staff and chaplains in around a dozen local authorities and also an innovative Masters module delivered through the University of Glasgow. This work is based on six core principles for Religious Observance/Time for Reflection:

1. It is the responsibility of the head teacher to decide who leads Religious Observance and how it fits into the curriculum in their school.
2. Outside leaders, including chaplains, when asked to assist in the delivery of Religious Observance, do so to assist the school in delivering a Religious Observance programme defined by the school and are bound by the need to be genuinely inclusive.
3. Religious Observance should be built on the exploration of sensing as defined by the Scottish Government’s review from 2000; *sensing mystery, values, meaningfulness, changed qualities of awareness, otherness, challenge*; in both the experience created by Religious Observance and through the reflection on that experience.



4. Religious Observance is not, and should never be confessional in nature (it is not worship nor can it be).
5. The very best Religious Observance is often pupil led.
6. A change of name for Religious Observance events can often have a very positive effect on the sense of inclusion and is to be encouraged, eg "time for reflection".

**16.3.7** It is important to underline that the Church of Scotland recognises that chaplains are not in school by right but by invitation of the head teacher. Their core task is to assist the school in achieving its goals and objectives in whatever way the head teacher feels is helpful to the school. This may or may not include the statutory requirement for the school to deliver Religious Observance.

**16.3.8** Feedback from those involved in delivering Religious Observance has suggested that the name change to something like "Time for Reflection" has made the events feel much more inclusive and has helped ensure that, as the guidelines say, "all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in forms of religious observance without compromise to their personal faith stances".

**16.3.9** The unsolicited approach from the Humanist Society Scotland to the Council jointly to call for a name change was therefore seen by the Council as a tribute to the work it had undertaken since the 2005 guidelines and as a potentially useful mark of support for the Church's work in schools. The Council emphasises that its understanding of the agreement reached with the Humanism Scotland was solely on the issue of the name change and not on any other aspect of Religious Observance.

**16.3.10** The Council's objective in agreeing to the joint approach was to celebrate and commend the good practice that we see across the country as examples for others to follow. The Church and Society Council had no intention of calling for a removal of religious content from Religious Observance/Time for Reflection: such a call would in fact breach the guidelines. The Council remains

committed to including faith, God and the insights of the Christian tradition in Religious Observance; we simply believe also that a change of name to Time for Reflection will help those guidelines – and our ministers and chaplains in schools – work even more effectively.

**16.3.11** There was some additional concern in the Church that the news release included an additional comment that "external visitors to schools (should) agree with the Equality and Diversity Policy". It would be clearer to say that the Council believes that external visitors, while conducting Religious Observance or Time for Reflection, must abide by the school's Equality and Diversity Policy. There is no doubt, however, that some people are concerned by the decision to make a joint statement with the Humanist Society Scotland and the Council recognises that. The Council regrets that others have felt distress and worry with this course of action.

**16.3.12** The Stevenson Prize continues to celebrate good practice and once again attracted outstanding examples of Religious Observance. Entries from this and past years have now been collated as models of good practice and are available on the Church of Scotland website.

**16.3.13** In 2013 Westray Primary School won the Stevenson Prize. Pupils designed and built a prayer labyrinth and invited the local community to take part.

**16.3.14** Dunbar Primary School was the runner-up and pupils were highly commended for their video production of a Scottish Nativity Story which has had thousands of hits from around the world, and has even been used by teachers in the school in Sandy Hook Connecticut, where in December 2012 a horrendous shooting took place.

**16.3.15** The 2014 winners will be presented at the General Assembly.

**16.4 The provision of and improved access to new resources for the delivery of high quality Religious and Moral Education in Scottish schools**

**16.4.1** The Education Committee has developed two



significant resources for Religious and Moral Education (RME):

- The first, in partnership with the Religious Education Movement Scotland and funded by the Jerusalem Trust provides access to over 100 new resources specifically for the teaching of Christianity in Scotland. [www.remscotland.org.uk](http://www.remscotland.org.uk)
- The second, funded by Greyfriars Tolbooth and Highland Kirk is a resource to explore the story of Greyfriars as both a place of national significance (the venue for the signing of the National Covenant and the birthplace of the Greyfriars Bobby story), and as a living community of faith both now and the past. The project is in development and we will publicise the web address as soon as the website goes live.

**16.4.2** The Education Committee has also made sure that the wider work of the Church and Society Council is being made accessible for those working in RME. It has supported RME through further development of the Moderator's Medal. In 2013 the theme was 'Inspirational Lives'. The 2013 winners were:

- 10 to 13 age group
  - Winners: Erin Devine and Shauna Elliot-Hook from Ross High School for a poster about Corrie Ten Boom.
  - Highly Commended: Ryan Lloyd and Ewan Bells from Ross High School for a poster and story about Euan Murray.
- 14 to 15 age group
  - Winner: Elizabeth Boywer from Chryston High School for a poster about the Rev John Harper.
  - Highly Commended: Laura Smith from Chryston High School for a PowerPoint about Sam Childers.
- 16 to 18 age group
  - Winner: Calum Keys from Stonelaw High School for a poem called *My Faith*.

**16.4.3** The 2014 winners will be announced at the General Assembly.

## **16.5 Impact of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and resource reductions on the delivery of meaningful core Religious and Moral Education**

**16.5.1** The 2013 General Assembly instructed the Council to investigate the impact of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and resource reductions on the delivery of meaningful core Religious and Moral Education for all pupils in S1 to S6 and report to the General Assembly of 2014. We contacted all 32 of Scotland's local authorities with a Freedom of Information request to find out the picture of the situation at a local level. At the time of writing 23 local authorities had responded, offering information on the numbers of Religious and Moral Education (RME) specialists, the prevalence of discrete RME departments, the provision of core RME and the alternatives used when there were no specialists in the school. A distinction should be drawn between what is referred to as core RME and the opportunity for pupils to work for a RME qualification:

- *Core RME* – Schools have a statutory requirement to offer one period a week for RME for all pupils up to S6, whether or not they are sitting examinations in the subject. It is the implementation of this core requirement which triggered the request for this report.
- *Pupils working towards qualifications* – There has been a recent trend for more pupils to work for and sit exams in RME qualifications. This is a very good sign and the Church's Education Committee believes that schools and staff should be commended for their commitment and desire for young people to engage with the issues involved.

**16.5.2** The survey of local authorities highlighted some very important issues:

1. The advent of changes in the way schools are organised, along with the moves to much more cross-disciplinary learning means that the vast majority of High Schools no longer have a discrete Religious and Moral Education department; but this is now the case for most subjects. Subjects are now more often delivered through faculties. The survey showed that RME was most often part of a

Humanities or Social Subjects faculty, usually with subjects like History, Geography and Modern Studies. In some cases the faculty was Health and Wellbeing and included subjects like Home Economics and/or Physical Education. Another example was a faculty of Global Studies. Other combinations included Languages, Drama, Travel and Tourism or Citizenship. In many cases where there was more than one RME specialist teacher they were part of a faculty, whereas often where there was a discrete RME department, it was a single post, a potentially isolating situation as opposed to the collaborative opportunities offered by a faculty team. There has been a concern that the advent of faculties would see a diminution of RME as a subject; our research does not provide evidence that this was the case. However, how schools are organised does not necessarily give a direct insight as to how RME was valued or delivered.

2. What was more of a concern was that a significant majority of schools surveyed were not providing core RME for S5 and S6; the majority were covering S1 –S4 only. Some did indicate that progress was being made to include S5 and S6, other suggested that S5 and S6 pupils could opt in, or received their RME in Personal and Social Education or through conferences. It is clear however, that core RME is not being properly delivered beyond S4 in the majority of High Schools. More worrying still, in a small number of cases, core RME was only being delivered up to S3. It is a concern that resource and timetabling pressures may be, as was implied by the deliverance from the 2013 Assembly, encouraging trimming back in the provision of core RME. The move to choosing examination subjects in S4 may continue this trend, with core RME being delivered only up to S3. The Education Committee will be raising this with the Minister in the coming year.
3. In around eighteen schools, there was no specialist RME teacher employed and RME was being delivered by other teaching staff usually as a discrete subject though in a small number of cases the solution being offered was 'interdisciplinary learning', in other words, events and activities that covered some of the issues

of RME but not a stand-alone subject. In all these cases, the schools were rural schools with rolls below 350 pupils; these are situations where real creativity is required to maximize limited resources to achieve full curriculum coverage. The Education Committee is less concerned about these situations, recognising the particular circumstances involved, and will reflect on how it can best support and offer additional resources for teachers and pupils in these schools.

4. In one local authority there appear to be no specialist RME teachers in more than half of its schools, neither is discrete RME taught in those schools; staff in other subjects instead deliver RME. It is the intention of the Education Committee to meet with this authority to explore further why this is the case and what they intend to do to remedy the situation.

**16.5.3** The Education Committee has been represented on an Education Scotland 3-18 Curriculum Impact Review of Religious and Moral Education (a report of which is due to be published early in 2014). We will continue to explore with individual authorities issues around the impact of changes in the curriculum and in particularly RME resource allocations. We intend to report back to the 2015 General Assembly any relevant issues associated with further results from our survey as well as the Education Scotland review.

### **16.6 Effective chaplaincy in schools and further education colleges**

**16.6.1** Each year the Education Committee runs several events for chaplains, often in partnership with local authorities. These serve to support the chaplains, offer them training and allow opportunities for networking with colleagues from the church, schools and others involved in education. The quality of these events is such that more local authorities are offering to host these events and it is a model of work that the Committee intends to continue to develop.

**16.6.2** The Committee launched a new website for chaplains working in schools and colleges which can be found at [www.schoolsandfechaplains.org.uk](http://www.schoolsandfechaplains.org.uk). This

is a source of resources, best practice and a network of support for those involved in chaplaincy work with schools and colleges.

**16.6.3** The Church of Scotland's Education Committee has led the development of an ecumenical support network for Further Education (FE) college chaplaincy through the Scottish Churches Education Group. The response from FE colleges to the development of chaplaincy work has been heartening. The sector has been under huge financial pressure as part of recent restructuring; the Committee has heard how the support of chaplains to both students and staff has been much appreciated.

### **16.7 Well informed and effective Church of Scotland Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees**

**16.7.1** In 2013 the Education Committee put on several regional training events, continuing a recent pattern of working. Smaller, local events generate greater participation than fewer national events where sometimes considerable travel is required. Once again local authorities have been happy to host these events and the Education Committee has been pleased with the warm welcome and appreciation by local authorities of the work of church representatives on their education committees. The Church of Scotland as a whole should be thankful for – and continue to find ways to support – each of its 32 representatives in Scotland's Local Authority Committees. The Committee also works closely with the Scottish Catholic Education Service and the Catholic representatives on local authorities, and the additional representative of the other churches in the local area.

**16.7.2** In the Scottish Parliament, John Finnie MSP has proposed a Members' Bill which would remove the statutory right for church representatives to be part of these committees. Representatives of the Education Committee and Church and Society Council have met with Mr Finnie, and others who would be affected by the scope of the Bill such as the Educational Institute of Scotland and

parent groups. The Church of Scotland's response to the Bill is available on the website of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office at <http://www.actsparl.org/official-responses/education-and-children.aspx>. The main points the Church makes are:

1. The Bill presents a very narrow and somewhat outdated view of what is meant by democratic decision making, neglecting the vital role of civic society in Scottish life and the involvement of local people participating in the decisions which affect them.
2. The Church has played a historical role in serving the nation in the development of education and lifelong learning over centuries and continues to do so. The principle of well-being for all remains the driving force of the Church's commitment to the education system in Scotland. The Bill does not take account of this and its significance to a modern Scotland.
3. The experience and insight of the church representatives is highly regarded by a number of key individuals in several local authorities, including Directors of Education as well as elected councillors. Those appointed by the Church bring wisdom and understanding to decisions about how education is delivered across the country which is free from party-politics.

### **16.8 Consistent and effective engagement in public debate on the purpose and task of education in Scotland**

**16.8.1** The Education Committee has offered briefings and responses to MSPs on the confrontations on Religious Observance in schools. The Committee found that many of the arguments being used were both ill-informed about the purpose of Religious Observance and the inclusive nature of the Scottish Governments guidelines which the Church fully endorses. The impetus seemed primarily to promote the agenda of a small group who wish to impose their beliefs on schools and who seemed unwilling or unable to grasp the idea that people of faith are perfectly capable of offering their time and talents in service to others without proselytising in any way.

**16.8.2** Representatives of the Committee met with the spokespersons for education from all of the political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament and raised issues of concern including the impact of poverty on education, provision of RME in secondary schools, support for Religious Observance, and other related issues. The Education Committee also responded to a call for evidence on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

**16.8.3** The Education Committee has also held productive meetings with the Scottish Catholic Education Service, the Educational Institute for Scotland, Education Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCs). The GTCs is now an independent body and is adapting policies and procedures to be fit for purpose. Since the abolition of the General Teaching Council for England the GTCs is seen as an example for other nations in the UK and abroad. The Education Committee has also continued to be involved in the work of the Scottish Joint Committee on Religious and Moral Education, the Scottish Churches Education Group, the Religious Education Movement Scotland and the European Federation of Teachers of Religious Education.

### **16.9 Future plans in development**

The Committee is pleased to report to the General Assembly three areas of work for potential future development:

- A joint bid has been submitted to the Economic and Social Research Council by the Church, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Queen Margaret Universities to support research into the impact of Religious Observance in schools under the new guidelines.
- This year a joint conference with the Educational Institute for Scotland will consider ways of common working, improving understanding between church and teacher representatives and focusing on the impact of poverty on the ability of pupils to fulfil their potential.
- A revision of the Handbook for Local Authority Representatives has begun with the intention of publishing an ecumenical version.

## **17. Peacemaking and International Affairs**

### **17.1 Syria**

**17.1.1** The civil war in Syria has continued to cause shock and grief around the world. Allegations of crimes against humanity, including the use of chemical weapons, caused deep international tension in the summer of 2013. Many people believed that a US-led coalition would be ordered to intervene militarily, even though Russia and China looked set to veto any such resolution before the United Nations Security Council. It was against that background that the Westminster Parliament was recalled during the summer recess to debate and vote on a motion authorising military action. The Convener wrote to all MPs representing Scottish constituencies when news of their recall had been announced, in the following terms:

“With the West and Russia in a stand-off in the Security Council, is it conscionable to stand on the side-lines while the diplomats argue in New York and the people of Syria are gassed in their homes? It is such a complex, multi-layered conflict. But the history of Western involvement with the Middle East, our limited understanding of the complicated struggle which is taking place, the pleas of Middle East Christians like Dr Mary Mikhael who spoke at the General Assembly in 2013, and the wealth of Christian scepticism about war means that without United Nations and Parliamentary approval, British military involvement could be a catastrophe.”

**17.1.2** The importance of the Parliamentary recall cannot be underlined enough, for two reasons:

- It confirmed the strengthening role of Parliament, rather than the executive, in taking decisions about going to war, reducing the Royal Prerogative held by the incumbent Prime Minister.
- Parliament voted not to approve the use of British force in this context – a decision which may have forced the hand of other powers including the United States not to intervene.

**17.1.3** Subsequently the Syrian Government have agreed to destroy their stocks of chemical weapons, and

at the time of writing, peace talks had resumed Geneva. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said:

“We will go to Geneva with a mission of hope. The Geneva conference is the vehicle for a peaceful transition that fulfils the legitimate aspirations of all the Syrian people for freedom and dignity, and which guarantees safety and protection to all communities in Syria. The conflict in Syria has raged for too long. It would be unforgivable not to seize this opportunity to bring an end to the suffering and destruction it has caused.”

## 17.2 Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

**17.2.1** The big news of 2013 was the resumption of peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, co-ordinated by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry. The Church of Scotland continues to pray for peace and urge greater understanding and awareness of the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. To this end the Council continues to support and promote the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, an initiative of the World Council of Churches. In 2014 the Week runs from Sunday 21 September to Saturday 27 September. With the World Mission Council, Christian Aid and the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church and Society Council have supported a nationwide series of prayer vigils on the 24th of each month. This project is an international prayer movement co-ordinated by the ACT Alliance Palestine Forum. Events have been held in Fairlie, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Fort William and Linlithgow, and prayer resources have been shown on the Church of Scotland website on the 24th of each month.

**17.2.2** Since the reception at the last General Assembly of The inheritance of Abraham? A report on the ‘promised land’ representatives from the Council have had a number of meetings with representatives from Scottish and British Jewish organisations. The Convener has also written to the staff members of the Church of Scotland’s Tabeetha School in Jaffa to underline the Council’s support and encouragement for their work.

**17.2.3** A document entitled *Time For Action* has been written as a British Christian response to the Kairos Palestine document *A Moment of Truth*. An accompanying website ([www.kairosbritain.org.uk](http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk)) has been set up with information and suggested courses of action to be taken to further peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. Congregations and individuals are encouraged to read and discuss the document, and sign their agreement and take action where appropriate.

## 17.3 Bolivia

**17.3.1** In October the Council Convener visited Bolivia with Kathy Galloway, the head of Christian Aid Scotland, and Iain Cunningham of the World Mission Council. They saw at first hand the impact of climate change on the natural environment and on the people. They saw the impact of melting glaciers and changing rainfall patterns. Sally Foster-Fulton has written that:

“From our hotel in La Paz, we were told that we should have been able to see a huge glacier, part of the identity of the people for generation upon generation. Now because of the climate change, that glacier is melting so rapidly that soon it will be gone. Less predictable, more intense rainy seasons also cause flooding and landslides and dangerous conditions on the mountain cities and communities around La Paz”.

**17.3.2** Christian Aid is working with a partner CIPCA to help communities adapt to climate change. One project is to help communities find ways to conserve glacial melt water to ensure a reliable supply in the face of change. Cecilia Cordova of Christian Aid Bolivia said that the mountains were traditionally seen as the ‘elders’ of the people, and that the loss of the glacier was like bereavement, the death of their ‘elder’. The impact of climate change is both physical and spiritual.

**17.3.3** With Christian Aid the Church and Society Council will publicise resources to congregations to share the stories from Bolivia and help congregations in Scotland reaffirm their commitment to carbon reduction



work. Without a renewed commitment to cut our carbon emissions in the rich countries of the world the changes we witness in developing countries will inevitably grow in number and intensity affecting an ever larger number of people around the world.

**17.3.4** One of the tangible partnerships between Scotland and Bolivia has been working with *Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teológica* through jointly running a series of inter-cultural contextual Bible studies. Christian Aid Scotland are facilitating this series of biblical dialogues, linking up three groups in Bolivia and three groups in Scotland who will be studying the same material in parallel, using video link technology to have an opportunity to exchange ideas. The three themes for the dialogues are gender justice, environmental issues and north-south relations as chosen by the Bolivia group and include a wide range of Bible passages. The gender justice group is meeting in Dunblane with future groups intending to meet in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness.

### **17.3.5 Preserving the rainforest**

**17.3.5.1** Bolivia is one of the ten most bio-diverse countries in the world. The Amazonian region is an area of global heritage, at the heart of international debate about the use of natural resources in an increasingly resource-constrained world. It is one of the richest areas in terms of natural resources, but the poorest country in South America. It is also one of the most unequal in terms of access to these resources and the rights of historically excluded groups, such as indigenous, women and rural farming communities.

**17.3.5.2** Christian Aid's programme in the Beni region of Bolivia promotes the rights of forest communities and other vulnerable groups under threat. Deforestation is a huge problem; the country lost 6.5 percent of its forest cover during the period 1990-2005, much of it illegally, increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

**17.3.5.3** The group from Scotland visited the small indigenous communities of Bermeo and Santa Rosa. These villages live very simply, with a degree of mutual help

and cooperation that puts our 'developed' communities to shame. They manage their surroundings in a way that does not undermine the delicate ecosystem. And yet we could see how vulnerable these small communities are to a host of external threats. Christian Aid partner CIPCA has supported indigenous communities in securing land titles on 367,000 hectares in the Beni region. But this legal hold is fragile. In the name of 'food security', the door has been opened to the commercialisation and foreign take-over of productive lands for mono-crops and cattle ranching. The Amazon is once again experiencing something of a gold rush by mining companies, and oil exploration is going on in national parks. But the extractive model is socially and environmentally unsustainable.

**17.3.5.4** Other threats come as a result of climate change. Forest communities and towns in the Bolivian Amazon are faced with increasing hazards such as flooding from more extreme and intense rainy seasons and forest fires due to hotter dry seasons. Lack of consultation with affected communities about massive infrastructure projects such as dams and superhighways means that a way of life which protects the rainforest remains fragile.

**17.3.5.5** So the chocolate factory established by Christian Aid and CIPCA in April 2013 is vitally important. It is community based production which keeps income in the local area, meaning that people don't have to go out looking for work in the informal labour market, taking them away from their communities, where they are more vulnerable to exploitation. Cacao is resilient to flooding because the fruits grow high up on the tree. It supports indigenous communities' claims on land which is constantly threatened by deforestation. It preserves the rain forests, reducing risk of logging and forest fires where the agro forestry systems are actively managed by local people. And it strengthens food security for families at a time when food market prices are sensitive to high inflation by guaranteeing them a buyer and a fair price for their harvest.



## 17.4 Europe

**17.4.1** This year's report from the World Mission Council focuses on Europe as a centre for mission partnership and common witness. It is in the context of the World Mission report that we highlight a number of important European political and theological issues.

**17.4.2** 2014 marks the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. 2014 also marks the 80th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration of 1934, leading to the emergence of the Confessing Church in Germany in questioning and rejecting the demands of Nazism. These anniversaries show the importance of peace, stability, justice and reconciliation at the political, economic and social levels in Europe. The churches have a deep responsibility to promote such values in society, not just for the absence of future warfare but to promote the greater Biblical vision of the peaceable kingdom for all (Isaiah 11:1-10) and Christ's call for life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

**17.4.3** The post-World War II mechanisms for promoting peace and reconciliation in Europe are founded upon international institutions, the most prominent of which is the European Union. The absence of war between the nations of Western Europe since 1945 should be celebrated but never taken for granted, nor should the peacebuilding role of the EU and other institutions be underestimated.

**17.4.4** Article 17(3) of the Consolidated Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (as amended by the Lisbon Treaty of 2007) provides that "Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations".<sup>82</sup> The Church of Scotland is a member of the Conference of European Churches (and its Church and Society Commission) which is best placed to carry out this work. The Church of Scotland has contributed directly to this work – such

as the visit of Adrian Shaw, Climate Change Officer, to Brussels in 2013.

**17.4.5** The next elections to the European Parliament will be held on 22 May 2014; the importance of the role of MEPs should not be overlooked despite the understandable preoccupation with the forthcoming independence referendum.

**17.4.6** The Committee on Ecumenical Relations encourages the Church of Scotland's full participation in the work of the Conference of European Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. We co-operate closely with the Committee and urge careful study of its report.

**17.4.7** 2013-14 has seen continued economic and fiscal turbulence throughout Europe, but with some glimmers of optimism (such as Ireland successfully exiting the EU/IMF bailout in December 2013). Despite predictions to the contrary, the Euro has survived as a currency and Latvia became the 18th member of the Eurozone on 1 January 2014. The European Union has an increasing role on the world stage, notably through its Common Foreign and Security Policy. Catherine Ashton, a former UK Government minister, is the current High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Church must continue to raise awareness of the human dimension to economic, trade and security policies, particularly their impact on the poor.

**17.4.8** The Scottish independence referendum on 18th September 2014 raises questions of Scotland's status within the EU, either as an independent Member State or as a continuing part of the UK. In the event of a 'yes' vote, it is imperative that Scotland continuing membership of the EU is recognised by the EU itself and all other Member States. Given that Scotland has been part of the EU since 1973, it can be noted that there is no mechanism in EU law for the expulsion of a Member State or any part of its territory.

**17.4.9** On a UK level a further possibility is an 'in/out' referendum on EU membership in the second half of the

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm73/7310/7310.pdf>

current decade. Backbench attempts have been made in the UK Parliament to legislate for this recently, and the Prime Minister has indicated that, should the Conservatives win a majority at the next election, they would seek to put the question to the public. The 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I should concentrate minds as to the consequences of tragic failure of European nations to co-operate rather than confront. The EU and its policies are not above criticism, but the EU has contributed greatly to economic development in Scotland and not just in grants for infrastructure improvement. Above all, the EU has helped to secure a peaceful political environment in which the people of Europe can trade, travel, interact and work.

**17.4.10** The Church as a whole should take note of and reaffirm the commitments the General Assembly made in 1996: to the principle of an ever closer union between the peoples of Europe and to fully support the development of the European Union as an instrument for peace, justice, democracy and social cohesion throughout Europe and the wider world.<sup>83</sup> Withdrawal from the European Union is not in the interests of the citizens of Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom or the wider European Union.

## 17.5 Nuclear weapons

**17.5.1** Since 1983, when the General Assembly declared its conviction that nuclear weapons are by their nature morally and theologically wrong, the Church of Scotland has consistently called for unilateral nuclear disarmament. Collectively, Scottish Churches have expressed a belief that nuclear weapons are inherently evil and have urged continued opposition to the UK's nuclear warheads on Trident missiles in submarines based in Faslane near Helensburgh.

**17.5.2** The Faslane Easter Witness for Peace has become a regular fixture in the Scottish Churches' calendar. At the time of writing it is hoped that members of the Church and Society Council will be able to attend the

2014 Witness before Easter, along with many others from across the whole Church of Scotland. The Council would also commend future events to all members and congregations and encourage as many people as possible to attend, or join in prayer for, the 2015 Easter Witness for Peace at Faslane, which is expected to be held on Saturday 28 March 2015.

**17.5.3** In 2013 the General Assembly commended the Iona-Westminster Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace. Walkers in a peaceful witness travelled from the ancient spiritual centre of Scotland to the modern-day centre of power and influence in Whitehall, Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament.

**17.5.4** The 2014 General Assembly is the last before the UK General Election next year. The coalition Government have put the decision about replacing Trident off until after the election, due to disagreements between the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives about what the replacement should look like. The election campaign should be an opportunity to question candidates about their views – and their parties – on the question of nuclear disarmament. Trident is also an issue in the Scottish independence referendum, as the pro-independence parties have said they would remove Trident from Scotland. On the other hand, anti-Trident unionists point out that simply moving the submarines to Barrow, Devonport or Portsmouth would not necessarily mean a reduction in warheads, and so raises the question: would the world really be a safer place?

**17.5.5** October-November 2013 was also the time of the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea. The fears of a nuclear winter are far more real on the Korean peninsula compared to Western Europe. For Europeans, the Cold War nightmare may now be behind us, but the unpredictable nature of the North Korean regime means that for the people in that region, total annihilation remains a real threat. Delegates at the WCC Assembly passed a resolution recommitting the World Council of Churches to its position of opposition to nuclear weapons.

<sup>83</sup> Deliverances 22 and 23 of the report from the Committee on Church and Nation *The European Union – a crisis or an opportunity?* Pp. 11/32-11/44 of the 1996 Blue Book

## 17.6 Army age of recruitment

**17.6.1** In October the Council was approached by Child Soldiers International, a UK-based charity working internationally on human rights research and advocacy, who seek to end the military recruitment and the use in hostilities, in any capacity, of any person under the age of 18 by state armed forces or non-state armed groups. The Convener was invited to be a joint signatory of a letter to the Ministry of Defence on their policy of recruiting children aged 16 and 17 into the armed forces.<sup>84</sup> The General Assembly over many years, and as recently as 2013, has affirmed our commitment to human rights. This includes the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child.

**17.6.2** The Church and Society Council has also in the past reported on *Growing Up in Scotland*, which underlined the many pressures that come to bear on young people today. One of the strongest reasons for signing the letter resonates with how we support our children: while not denying that the army can offer some opportunities for some young people, it is an indictment on us all that we are asking our most vulnerable children to pay yet another extortionate poverty premium. Recruitment into the army at 16 and 17 is disproportionately higher from deprived areas. As a country our aspiration should be to offer a safe, supportive environment and educational opportunities without requiring children to sign up to the very adult reality of death or injury on a battlefield. Most of the 16 year olds recruited enter training with very few, if any, qualifications which de-selects them for less dangerous jobs in the armed forces – one third go straight into the infantry and are first in line for the front line as soon as they turn 18. The decision to join the armed forces and put your life on the line is an adult decision; society has a responsibility to consider how best it protects and nurtures all its citizens. Sixteen year olds recruited are much more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, have addiction issues, behave violently after

discharge and attempt suicide than either adult recruits or their civilian contemporaries. Research by Child Soldiers International reports that recruitment of children costs the MoD considerably because of the high drop-out rate of young recruits.

**17.6.3** Britain is the only country in the EU which recruits children, and is one of only 19 countries around the world. The letter was timed to be released around Remembrance Weekend to draw attention to the fact that during the First World War, official recruitment age was 18 – and overseas deployment was only allowed after 19 years. The letter was also signed by the Chief Executive of Children in Scotland, Jackie Brock, as well as the Archbishop of Wales the Most Rev Dr Barry Morgan, along with all the Church in Wales bishops, and many others.

**17.6.4** The Council is aware that some have questioned the basis on which the Convener's public association with this issue has been made; we hope this report has clarified and explained this. The Council is charged with making ethical contributions to public policy making, and on some political issues it is often a difficult role for the Convener to play, seeking to discern the most effective way of getting a distinctively Christian message across to the wider world. However, given the important relationship the Council has to the General Assembly, we are happy to put the question to the Assembly for their consideration and direction.

## 17.7 International development

**17.7.1** 2013 was a landmark year for Britain and international development. For the first time the UK's budget for Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI). A proposal for a minimum target for development aid was first raised by the World Council of Churches in 1958, which was subsequently refined and the 0.7% target was agreed by the United Nations in 1970. We must now rejoice that an idea born in the Churches has produced fruit.

**17.7.2** Aid is of course no substitute to trade and tax. Aid can help alleviate absolute poverty and destitution, but the goal for so many is the idea that a nation can

<sup>84</sup> The full text of the letter is: [http://www.child-soldiers.org/user\\_uploads/pdf/jointltrtomarkfrancois6november20132984722.pdf](http://www.child-soldiers.org/user_uploads/pdf/jointltrtomarkfrancois6november20132984722.pdf)

stand on its own, without the need for handouts or to be dependent on foreign assistance. This might happen through developing trade, allowing economies to flourish, and enabling countries to raise taxes to pay for health, education and infrastructure. The Church and Society Council works with Christian Aid to raise awareness of issues around tax dodging by multinational corporations. It is estimated that \$160 billion of tax revenue is lost to developing countries each year – more than the annual global aid budget. In 2013 the Church of Scotland was a member of the *Enough Food For Everyone – IF* campaign, a joint programme of Churches and faith groups, aid agencies and development organisations to coincide with the UK's hosting of a G8 summit – the first since the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** year of 2005.

**17.7.3** The IF campaign can celebrate a number of big successes:

- An additional \$4.1 billion was pledged by Governments and other donors to tackle malnutrition which could save the lives of almost 2 million children by 2020.
- At the June 2013 summit on Trade, Transparency and Tax all British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies committed to sign a convention which would help improve transparency.
- Thousands of protesters gathered in Belfast and put huge pressure on the G8 to set out an ambition to tackle tax dodging which they did days later at the Summit. This aspiration was unthinkable just a few months ago, but more work is needed to see this ambition turned into real action that will help poor countries.
- The issue of land grabbing in developing countries was discussed at the G8 and acknowledged by world leaders in the G8 Summit's final declaration. World leaders, as well as the UK Department for International Development, are keen to build on this and develop land rights as a wider area of UK expertise. The key win in this area was getting the issue on to the G8 agenda at all.
- In Scotland, the Scottish Government has doubled the Climate Justice Fund to help communities adapt to the impact of climate change and have committed £600,000 to promote global citizenship education,

investing in our future generations so they understand their role and responsibilities in bringing about lasting change. The Scottish Government have also said they are looking at how all of the work that goes on across government should do no harm to communities in the developing world.

**17.7.4** There remains an ongoing challenge for Churches and individuals; to continue being vigilant to ensure Governments live up to their commitments and that further action is taken to continue to make progress. For example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were targets set around 2000 to achieve progress in eight key areas of human development by the year 2015. As the deadline approaches, although there have been some massive gains in some regions, other parts of the world remain entrenched in poverty. What succeeds the MDGs will be vitally important to the success of development and opportunity for the years ahead.

## **17.8 Justice and Peace Scotland**

**17.8.1** The Council is pleased to report a growing together of work and conversation with the Justice and Peace Commission of the Scottish Catholic Bishops' Conference. During the past year a Council member (Jack Laidlaw) has been appointed as an ecumenical member of the Justice and Peace Commission, and from May 2014 a reciprocal arrangement will begin, with a Roman Catholic representative coming to meetings of the Church and Society Council. With changes to the Catholic hierarchy in Scotland and of course with the arrival of Pope Francis and his refreshing – and sometimes radical – way of working we are hopeful for a positive development of the bridges between our two traditions, and especially being able to present a united position on issues such as nuclear disarmament, climate change and migration.

## **18. Staffing and thanks**

**18.1** The department has said farewell to Alison Gemmell (Local Involvement), Maggie Wylie (Climate Change), David McTaggart (Education). The Council would like to acknowledge its appreciation and thanks to these people.

Ken Coulter has completed a fixed-term education project on Education and has now been re-appointed to another role with the Council, again looking at education. Ken took seriously ill in November 2013 and, while he has made very good progress, we continue to pray for his recovery.

**18.2** Chloe Clemmons, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer, went on maternity leave in March 2014. David Bradwell, the Council's Associate Secretary, has been seconded to cover Chloe's absence and Andrew Tomlinson has been appointed as Associate Secretary for the duration of Chloe's maternity leave. We have welcomed several other new members of staff over the last year: Fiona Buchanan (Local Involvement), Miriam

Dobson (Climate Change), David Hunter (Credit Unions), and Daryl Bates (Prison Visitor Centres).

**18.3** The Council would like to express its thanks and deep appreciation to all the people who have assisted in the writing and preparation of this report, especially those from outwith the Council who have offered their time and advice.

*In the name and by the authority of the Council*

SALLY FOSTER-FULTON, *Convener*  
CHRISTOPHER WIGGLESWORTH, *Vice-Convener*  
EWAN AITKEN, *Secretary*

